Two Roads Lesson 2: In the Beginning God

The Road Less Traveled: Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 5:3

Read: Genesis 1, Job 1, Ecclesiastes 1-12

How does being poor in spirit move us down the road less traveled? Who are the poor in spirit? The poor in spirit are those who recognize that they have nothing to give to God. They recognize that God is the source of all life (“I knit you together in your mother’s womb”, Psalm 139:13); that He alone knows the time of our death (“all my days are ordained by God”, Psalm 139:16); that God is in control of all things, people and events (“The Lord does whatever pleases Him in the heaven and on the earth, in the seas and all their depths.” Psalm 135:6); that God is the Creator, and we are the created. (Genesis 1).

Genesis One describes God the Creator and all that He made. After making the earth and furnishing it with vegetation, animals, and fish, He made man in His own image, male and female. “They were both naked and they felt no shame.” (Gen. 1) God made the earth and all that is in it and gave it to man, who had no need of clothes. What can man give to God that He has not received at God’s hand?

Understanding that all we have and all that we are comes from the hand of God leaves us “poor in spirit.” The only response we have to this realization is worship. Paul captures the essence of our relationship to God in Romans 11:33-36:

Oh, the depths of the riches of the wisdom of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out. Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor? Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever.

Recognition that we are poor in spirit is the foundational concept for the rest of Jesus’ teachings. But we are rebellious and want to do things our own way. When Adam and Eve decided they wanted to be in control of their lives instead of God, their sin disrupted their perfect state and their relationship with God. Now they felt shame. Now they needed clothes to cover their nakedness. But the clothes they made from fig leaves were not sufficient to cover their nakedness nor durable enough to last. So God, because God is love and loves His creation, made them garments of animal skin to clothe them. (Gen. 3:21) In His love, God provided a way to cover their shame and their nakedness. Thus began the sacrificial system of shedding blood to cover our sins—first, the sacrifice of an animal to cover Adam and Eve’s nakedness, then the sacrifice of bulls and goats at the tabernacle to cover the sins—the nakedness—of the Israelites; and finally the blood sacrifice of God’s son to permanently erase our sins—our nakedness—when we believe on Him and establish a relationship with our Creator God. We, therefore, have a choice—remain in our nakedness because nothing we can do or achieve will cover our sins. Or cover our nakedness with Christ’s blood shed on the cross.

Solomon, the wisest man in all the earth, “devoted himself to study and explore by wisdom all that is done under heaven.” (Ecc. 1:12-14) He had seen all the things that are done under the sun and concluded that all of them are meaningless, a “chasing after the wind.” He, who had everything he desired, discovered that pleasure, great projects, toil and wealth, achievement, advancement, and riches were meaningless, as the same fate, death, awaits us all. And God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil. (Ecc. 12:4).

The apostle John, in Revelation, writes the words that Jesus told him to say to the church at Laodicea, who thought they had everything they needed:

You say, ‘I am rich, I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked. I counsel you to buy from the gold refined in fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness, and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. (Rev. 3:17-18)

Jesus was re-emphasizing Solomon’s conclusion: “Now all has been heard; fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.” (Ecc. 12:13)

Job and Paul are two examples of those who are poor in spirit. Job lived faithfully to God and God had richly blessed him. Satan, however, thought that if all God’s blessings were removed from Job that Job would curse God. God allowed Satan to destroy Job’s family, his possessions, and to inflict his body with open sores. Job’s response to all these disasters is as follows:

Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised. (Job 1:21)

The apostle Paul exhibited the same concept. In Philippians 4:11-13 he writes:

I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

Both Job and Paul understood that all things come from God and that God can work all things for the good of those who love Him. (Rom. 8:28) We are all naked and in need of covering. Being poor is spirit means we realize our nakedness and turn to God to cover our shame. God lovingly covers us when we place our trust in His wisdom, His power, and His plan. When we do this, we can be confident we are on the right road.