



February 11, 2007

The Message Made Manifest

As we rapidly approach the conclusion of the season of Epiphany we continue to focus on the message of Epiphany; Jesus being made manifest or made known as the Savior, the promised Messiah. He was made known to the wise men through the star; he was made known as the Messiah because He said He was the Messiah. He was made known as the Messiah because His opponents said He was the Messiah or the He claimed to be the Messiah. He is known as the Messiah because creation said He is the Messiah as He overcame the forces of nature through the working of miracles.

Today we continue on making Christ manifest and when we read the gospel for this morning you're probably thinking, "Matt, that's miracles again. We already covered that last week". And you're right but I want to focus on verses 18 & 19 of our gospel where Luke writes, "the people had come to hear Him and to be healed of their diseases those troubled by evil spirits were cured and the people all tried to touch Him because power was coming from Him and healing them all". Now, why did the people come? I found this interesting, there are two reasons they came. One, to hear Him and two, to be healed. Today we will see Jesus as the Messiah because He healed and He taught. But to understand His teachings we have to truly understand the healing.

Verse 19 says, "He healed them all". Now, what is meant by that? Of course it means those who were sick, crippled, or possessed were made well and whole. But it is so much more. When Jesus heals them all he's even healing those who are well. In the previous chapter, Luke 5, we see what this means. Jesus was teaching in a large crowd gathered around Him. He was in a house

so this large crowd was rather limited, they were packed into this house and no more could get to Him they were standing outside. There was a paralyzed man whose friends brought him to see Jesus because they felt Jesus could heal him. But they couldn't get to Jesus the house was too crowded so they went up on the roof, removed the tiles, and lowered the man to Jesus. Listen to what happens in Luke Chapter 5 verse 20, "When Jesus saw their faith He said Friend your sins are forgiven, the Pharisees and teachers of the law began thinking to themselves who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, "Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? Which is easier to say your sins are forgiven or to say get up and walk but they you may know that the son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins, I tell you get up, take your mat and go home". He immediately stood up, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God. What did Jesus do? He healed the man and he really healed the man. You see, He healed the man of his paralysis but when He really healed the man He forgave the man his sins.

The miracles show that Jesus is God's Son, the Messiah, because only God can do this but here's the big point; only God can forgive and heal us from the most debilitating disease of all, sin. Sin has infected everyone and Jesus is the only medicine that cures it. Which leads us to His teaching. Today he says, "Blessed are you who are poor for yours is the kingdom of God". To understand that we have to really focus on the words that are there and the first of course "blessed". Blessed is a religious term it means *those who enjoy the favor of the Lord*. Who is blessed? The poor. What is meant by poor? Well, when we compare this to Matthew's account we see it is the poor in spirit and the word that is used here for poor in Greek is the harshest form of poverty. You see there are two Greek words for poor one refers to a person who is so poor that he earns his bread by daily labor. The other, the one that's used here means *destitute, helpless, powerless*. This poorness is so great that an individual who has this poorness cannot get out of it by his or her own means. Someone must help them. So when we put that together and rephrase the beginning of this verse we could say instead of blessed, "Those who enjoy the favor of the Lord are those who's spirit is convicted by their sin, fall on their knees in repentance and seek help from the outside from God".

Now why do they do this? “For yours is the kingdom of God”. The first two words require a little study. Yours is has a double meaning to it. The first is “possessed through allocation by a second person”. This goes hand in hand with poor. You can’t do it so it is given to you. The second meaning is huge, “is” is present tense, and it is given to you now. What is given to the poor right now? The kingdom of God, “Blessed are you who are poor for yours IS the kingdom of God”. What Jesus is describing here is the first resurrection that is mentioned in Revelation 20:5 and in John 5:24 where Jesus Says, “I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes Him who sent me, has eternal life and will not be condemned”. He has crossed over from death to life. “I tell you the truth a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live”. The dead are those who are dead in their sin who are poor in spirit, they need help but when they hear the gospel of Jesus they immediately have eternal life; they have crossed over from death to life.

Putting it all together, we could read this verse in its entirety by saying, “Those who enjoy the favor of the Lord are those whose spirit is convicted by their sin, fall on their knees in repentance and seek help from the outside, from God who immediately gives them salvation and eternal life”. Now you know why the New Testament writers refer to this body as a tent. A tent isn’t permanent its transitory but our soul is everlasting. On the day a person realizes who they are, a sinner, and they turn to God in repentance their soul their very essence immediately passes form judgment and condemnation to eternal life. This image is supported by the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15.

The son leaves his dad and takes his riches with him he loses it all and he ends up with the pigs, feeding the pigs feeding the pigs in the mud. He says to himself, “even my father’s servants have it better than I.” So he goes back to his dad and he says, “Father I have sinned against heaven and against you.” And what does the father do? Before the son even speaks he goes running to meet him and then as the son speaks the father hugs him and when the son finished speaking the father puts the ring on his finger the coat on his back, sandals on his feet and he calls for a feast to be made.

You see the father doesn’t drag the son through the mud he is so happy and so joyful that his son has come back that he accepts repentance and immediately makes him a son, restores him

immediately. What a happy day that is for the son and for the father for the poor in spirit and their heavenly father. This is the message of the Messiah. Or at least the first half of it because verse 24 echoes it but does it in reverse, instead of blessed its now “woe”, a word that represents “coming doom”. Its future tense, “Woe to you who are rich”. Here the word rich refers to those who are abounding in material resources. “This is where they put their faith. This is their joy. They have chosen the future, woe because they are not right with God and they will spend eternity under His condemnation.” You see, they’ve replaced the Messiah with materialism, with worldly wealth and Jesus says woe to someone who replaces the Messiah with earthly pleasures.

When we look at our Gospel this morning you see that Christ’s message is all given in this point-counterpoint fashion and the dividing line between the two points is the Messiah who makes himself manifest so the people may know. So He says, “Blessed are those who hunger”. Who are the hungry? Those who are hungry for His words; for fulfilling His call. Matthew records it as, “those who hunger and thirst for righteousness”. They thirst and hunger for that which is right which is God’s word and God’s will. Jesus says, “Blessed are those who weep.” Why do they weep? They are saddened by the state of affairs; they are saddened by the sin of the world much like Jesus when He mourned over Jerusalem. The people were rejecting Him and He knew destruction was coming and He mourned this. Sin is running ramped and it causes the believer to mourn and weep and say, “God I’m sorry”. Blessed are those when men hate, exclude, insult and reject you because of your faith in Jesus”.

But for each one of those blessings there is a woe. “Woe to those who are well fed with the materialism of this life”. “Woe to those who laugh and celebrate and revel in their sin”. “Woe to those who man blesses because they find favor in man’s eye”, they build each other up and tell each other what they want to hear and they lead each other to destruction. Jesus made His message manifest, it comes in two parts, be poor in spirit, fall down, repent and honor Him and you get blessings now. You find favor with God because you are His child now. Or reject His message go with man’s inventions, woe the future is bleak.

So I guess the question today, are you poor in spirit? Do you hunger for righteousness, for God’s will? Do you weep over the sin

that's running ramped in this world? And, are you excluded, insulted, hated rejected because you're a Christian? Or to put it in another way, if you were charged with being a Christian is there is enough evidence for you to be convicted? My hope is that you are poor, hungry, weeping and that you can stand convicted because you are blessed.

In our Savior's name, Amen.