

TANGAZA COLLEGE

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA

HAPPY ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT

MATTHEW 5:3-10

(According to Matthew's Message in the Context of the Slums in Nairobi)

*A Long Essay Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for Baccalaureate in Sacred Theology*

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DECLARATION

I MATTHIAS MULUMBA KULE declare that this Long Essay is my original work achieved through my personal reading, scientific research method and critical reflections. It has never been submitted to any other College or University for academic credit. All sources have been cited in full and acknowledged.

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This Long Essay has been submitted for examination with my approval as moderator.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this long essay to my father, whose poverty in spirit remains for me something to admire. He always told me that we would better loose land than to fight with neighbours. His hope is always that we can never go hungry since God is there to take care of us. His simple life remains for me a strong support in my vowed poverty.

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It is my pleasure to take this chance to thank Fr. Tim. Redmond S.P.S. my moderator, who besides accompanying me throughout my research, I found a parent in him. He was always patient with me even when my mistakes and delays were rather annoying. I wish to thank in a special way all the lecturers of Tangaza College that have contributed a great deal to my understanding that I have invested in the research paper.

I wish to thank my beloved brothers and sisters of Kibera who always appeared joyful and welcoming to me in spite of lacking a lot of things including health in most cases. Indeed, they inspired me to pay attention to the fact that being poor does not deprive a person from being happy as long as he/she is spiritually poor.

I wish to thank my community members who were a great support for me in the struggle of writing this work. Often when I needed help following my limited knowledge of the computer, the brothers were ready to help.

May God reward all who supported me, those I have mentioned and those I did not mention.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Poverty from the very beginning is something that has not been easy to understand. Generally it has been known as something to eradicate. On the other hand, poverty has been known as a channel through which one can be drawn to holiness. Above all so many religious men and women have taken the vow of poverty, yet there are as many definitions of poverty as the number of those who have vowed for it.

Matthew presents to us a prominent teaching in the sermon on the mount, where he promotes poverty in spirit as a means to the kingdom of heaven. But how can we attain the kingdom of heaven if we have not been poor in spirit? And how can we be poor in spirit if we have not first of all understood what it means? Matthew's Jesus calls for our understanding of spiritual poverty.

Matthew's teaching of Jesus about the poor in spirit has a background in the Old Testament, especially in the Pentateuch, the prophetic literature and in the psalms. It is for this reason that the first chapter treats the historical background of the poor in the Pentateuch, the prophetic literature and the psalms. The message that Matthew 5:3-10 bears is not only for the Matthean community, but also for us today. Among the many applications of this topic *poor in spirit*, in this paper I will endeavor to apply Matt 5:3-10 to the context of the slums in Nairobi. I believe that this topic of the poor in spirit will help us to understand our brothers and sisters in the slums thereby helping us to love and respect them more. The third chapter deals with this application.

I have every hope that this study does not only have a message for the Christians living in Nairobi as a place surrounded by slums, but also for all the readers of this work in so far as we are all called to be poor in spirit.

Motivation and Aims of the Study

I wish to investigate the meaning of the poor in spirit. This is because people have difficulties with distinguishing between any poor person and the one who is poor in spirit. Even the religious people with a vow of poverty still find it hard to draw a line between the two. This makes our relationships with the poor difficult especially as far as living and encouraging them is concerned. Following my findings, I wish to shed more light on this question.

The Procedure of the Study

As with any Biblical text, I will approach the text (Matt 5:3-10) exegetically in order to have a deeper understanding of it. Then I will discuss the theology of the text. This paper contains three chapters. The first chapter deals with the understanding of the poor in the Old Testament. The second chapter focuses on the exegesis of Matt 5:3-10. And the third chapter is about the theology, message and application of spiritual poverty.

Why this Kind of Procedure?

It is important that before probing into the message of Matt 5:3-10, we should trace the background of poverty in the Old Testament. The Pentateuch, the prophetic literature and the psalms give interesting ideas about the poor with close connection to the poor in spirit as presented in Matt 5:3-10. The primary focus of the Old Testament understanding of the poor as blessed was that being poor is not just enough for the kingdom of heaven. Rather, the one who is poor and blessed, is that person who besides

being poor, his/her mind is set on God, he/she is pious and keeps the Law of Moses. And this is a good foundation for chapter two where the focus is on deepening the understanding of the message of the poor in spirit from an exegetical point of view. That is, Matthew's Jesus did not just talk from a vacuum but from an already existing tradition best presented by the Pentateuch, the prophetic literature and the psalms.

In the second chapter, before dealing with the exegesis of the Text, I will briefly clarify the following points: Delimitation of the Text. Here, I wish to explain why I took Matt 5:3-10 from the other texts that are before or after it. Then I will say something about the context of the text which is a great aid to understanding the message contained in the text. The text has a synoptic parallel in Luke 6:20-21, and I will explain the reason for my choosing Mathew and not Luke. Thereafter, I will say something about the form and structure of the text. Finally, I will give an exegesis of Matt 5:3-10 as a means to try and enter into the world of Matthew for us to understand the message for the Matthean community and also for us today.

In chapter three, I will present the message of Matthew to his community which I will then apply to our present situation in our Christian life and particularly in the context of the slums in Nairobi.

Why this Application?

All of us Christians are exposed to the inclination of getting closer to wealth or attached to it. And much as we get attached to wealth, we get detached from God just like when a person moves from point A to B, the more he gets closer to point B, the farther he is from point A. And so we lose the right track to the kingdom. That is, we all need to be

poor in spirit so as to be blessed or happy. It is for this reason that the message is applied to contemporary Christians.

In the second part, I will apply the text to the context of the slums of Nairobi especially for the Christians to know that while they may be looking down upon the slum dwellers, God has a special regard for them in so far as they do his will with poverty in spirit.

CHAPTER I

The Understanding of the Poor in the Old Testament

1.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the understanding of who the poor were from an economic point of view. But also proceeding from the actual lack of material or economic resources, the poor are hereby presented as people who develop a close relationship with God as they put all their trust in God. This is a background therefore of Matt 5:3-10 in terms of distinguishing between the normal poor and the poor with a religious or spiritual element. This chapter also aims at identifying the attitude of God towards the poor.

1.2 The Poor in the Pentateuch

In the Pentateuch, the word commonly used for the poor is עני which is the equivalent of πτωκος in Greek. Here, the word refers not only to those who are lacking in material things or rather economically poor people, but also those who are in a state of lowliness. Those who are distressed as a result of not having all that they need in life. They are those whom society looks at or takes to be of little worth, since they do not have inheritance of their own.¹

Following the fact that people can be poor for various reasons, the poor that the Pentateuch talks about are not those who deserve it. For instance, they are not those who are lazy so as to be unable to produce what they would get on their own. Rather, they are those who have had poverty or distress imposed on them either because of natural

¹ Bammel, *TDNT*, IV, 889

catastrophes for example bad harvest because of one reason or the other or by their fellow human beings that could hinder them from prospering or even taking what belongs to them such as land (Ex 23:6). Because of that, God protects them in such a way that he asks those who have to be mindful of them in terms of providing them with food and clothing and also doing justice to them (Ex 22:24; Lev 19:10; 23:22; Deut 15:11; 24:12-15)² Aware of the God's concern and protection, the poor get confidence in him which results in their being close to him. And so the poor were seen to be God's people. That is, poverty had a religious significance insofar as the poor were humble and pious.³ Having no land was also numbered among the qualities of poverty. For if one had no land, he/she would not produce food or other crops that could support him/her in life (Deut 14:28-29).⁴

1.3 The Poor in the Prophetic Literature

The prophets referred to the poor as people who lack material things such that they had to depend on other people's generosity. Most importantly, they refer to the poor as those people who owned no land. For example, they perceived that as absurd because all the people as from Deut 15:4 were supposed to have a share in the land such that there would be reasons for people to complain of poverty because of having no land (Deut 15:4).⁵ Unfortunately the wealthier and more powerful members of the society were driving the powerless out of their portions, in which case, the rich became richer and the

² J.D. DOUGLAS-F.F.BRUCE-R.V.G.TASKER-J.I.PAKER-D.J.WISEMAN, *NBD*, 955.

³ BAMMEL, "Πτωχος" *TDNT*, 889.

⁴ BAMMEL, "Πτωχος" *TDNT*, 889

⁵ BAMMEL, "Πτωχος" *TDNT*, 889

poor became poorer (Isa 5:8f; Mic 2:2)⁶ By and large, the poor in the prophetic literature were seen to be those people who were humiliated, oppressed, treated unjustly thereby leaving them in a condition where they were insecure (Isa 5:8).⁷

Being aware of their state of helplessness, the poor put all their trust and hope in God as one who would help them, since they had nobody else to depend on. But also they were faithful to God's law. That is, the poor could cry to God in prayer for help. And by so doing, they became so close to God and he listened to their prayers (Mic 3:1-3; Zeph 2:3; 3:11-13).⁸ As regards Zeph 2:3, some commentators point out that he seemed to say that the poor have more chances of being humble and therefore obedient to God's commandments, while on the contrary the powerful and rich people are more inclined to being tyrants as they oppress and mistreat the poor.⁹ That is, the poor have less temptations to pride since they have nothing or very little to be proud of. That gives them a chance to worship and put their trust in God rather than trusting in possessions.¹⁰ Although they were considered worthless in society, God inspired the prophets to announce to them the Good News that he would one day one time lead them to joy and consolation, whereby their misery would be brought to an end (Isa 61:1).¹¹

Much as the poor put their trust in God and cried to him, there are traces of being associated with the righteous or the people of God (Amos 2:6). Also in Isa 10:2, God talks of his people being robbed of their rights (cf. Isa 3:15; 14:32)¹²

⁶ Bammel, "Πτωχος" *TDNT*, 890

⁷ Bammel, "Πτωχος" *TDNT*, 890.

⁸ S.C. MOTT, "Poor" *HBD*, 808.

⁹ J.D. PLEINS, "Poor, Poverty" *ABD*, v 411.

¹⁰ O. COLLINS, ed., *DBC*, 609 cf. *DBC*, 830.

¹¹ ALLISON, *International Critical Commentary*, 443.

¹² Bammel, "Πτωχος" *TDNT*, 890.

1.4 The Poor in the Psalms

In the psalms the poor were understood as those people who were needy and in fact poor from the point of view of not having enough of their needs אֲבִיּוֹן Besides being economically poor the poor are referred to עָנִי thus afflicted and humble.¹³ However, following the Greek word πτωκος and its Hebrew equivalent (אֲבִיּוֹן), the Psalms present the poor in such a way that even if primarily they are those who are economically poor, they are also those are in a special way very much in need of God's help (Ps 12:5; 14:5; 22:24; 37:14; 69:29; 70:5; 86:1; 88:15).¹⁴ God in response to the problems and cry of the poor took care of them and he promised to protect them from the wicked people that contributed to their distress.¹⁵

The Psalmist present the poor people as people who, in spite of being in poor and difficult situations, still find reason for thanking God for everything that he does for them. For example, in the Psalms of lament it is evident that those who pray them are people who experience sickness, pain or any of the burdens that a human person can have. But on the other hand, that can be an occasion with in which one can encounter God and rediscover peace.¹⁶ With this in mind, Cox says that

the Psalmist presents himself before God, opens his heart to pour out his troubles, and during the course of the prayer receives confirmation of grace, he will then end his prayer with and expression of gratitude for what is to him a *fait-accomplis*.¹⁷

It sounds like a contradiction to say that the poor who are in distress and pain thank God. But the thanks of the poor people flowed from their experience of God's care for them

¹³ D.C. ALLISON, *International Critical Commentary*, 443.

¹⁴ D.C. ALLISON, *International Critical Commentary*, 443.

¹⁵ See footnote on Ps 34:18. in the African Bible.

¹⁶ D. COX, *The Psalms in the Life of God's People*, 65.

¹⁷ D. COX, *The Psalms in the Life of God's People*, 66.

(Ps 34:8). And so those who surrendered themselves to God were not hindered from being happy in spite of suffering. That is, lack of economic resources was not an impediment to being happy especially resulting from their hope and trust in God.¹⁸

1.5 Conclusion

Already in the Old Testament, the poor are seen to be God's people whom he takes care of. But it is not just because they are poor as if poverty is a virtue for which they are elected. Rather, their being referred to as children of God is based on their acceptance of God and total surrender to God, thereby seeking to do his will and no more.

¹⁸ See footnote From the African Bible's Comment on Psalm, 34:18.

CHAPTER II

Exegesis of Matt 5:3-10

2.1 Introduction

This chapter brings to the reader the analytical exegesis of Matt 5:3-10 to give a flight back to the world of Matthew in as far as the message of the text to his community is concerned. The chapter alerts the reader that all the other beatitudes as from vv. 4-10, are all qualities of a poor person in spirit. Besides, this chapter deals briefly with other points as follows: The delimitation of the text, textual criticism, the parallel text in Luke 6:20-21, the form and the structure.

2.2 Delimitation

Examining the text before the *sermon on the mount*, it is clear that there is change of place. For from chapter four as from verses 12-25 Jesus was busy in Galilee proclaiming the Good News in different places including some synagogues. Besides he was going around healing the sick. But regarding the sermon on the mount, its content suggests that Jesus was now stationed in a particular place, which is commonly known as the *mount* where he moved as he saw the crowds coming to him.¹⁹ To that effect therefore, there is a change of place. Moreover, concerning the sermon on the mount, it is not only the place that is changed, but also there is a slight change in the topic. For while Jesus concentrated on the proclamation of the kingdom and healing during his ministry in

¹⁹ D.J. HARRINGTON, *The Gospel of Matthew: Sacra Pagina*, 78.

Galilee, in the sermon he continued to proclaim about the kingdom with a particular emphasis on the ways through which one could inherit the kingdom of heaven.²⁰

Concerning the characters, Jesus is of course the main character as in the text before Matt 5:3-10. Then there are the crowds who followed him from Galilee, but the emphasis seems to be on the presence of the disciples of Jesus as part of his audience.²¹

Interestingly, vv.3 and 10 bear the same promise “for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Some commentators say that that promise points to verses 3 and 10 as an inclusion.²² That is, all the eight beatitudes (vv.3-10) are concerned with the same people (the poor in spirit).²³

Putting all these factors mentioned in consideration, it is worthwhile that this paper deals with Matt 5:3-10, which is seen to be concerned with the poor in spirit.

2.3 Textual Criticism

Concerning the textual criticism, there is not much said about the text. However, there are two different views about the arrangement of verses 3 and 5. One tradition is for the arrangement as it is in Matthew’s gospel. That is, having v 4 in between v 3 and 5. The other tradition holds that it would have sounded more rhetoric to have v 5 as v 4. That is, the promise of heaven in v 3 would be followed by the promise of inheriting the earth in v 5 such that heaven and earth are not kept separate.²⁴

²⁰ D.J. HARRINGTON, *The Gospel of Mathew: Sacra Pagina*, 79.

²¹ D.J. HARRINGTON, *The Gospel of Mathew: Sacra Pagina*, 78.

²² F.W. BEARE, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 133.

²³ F.W. BEARE, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 133.

²⁴ B. METZGER, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 12.

2.4 Context of the Text

a. Remote Context

In the fourth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew Jesus is tempted by Satan. By all means Satan tried to look for ways of causing Jesus to drift away from God by use of material things and worldly glory as Satan had managed in the imperial status which was oppressive and committed to self interest. It is evident that Satan had control over the Roman Empire since he claimed ownership over the kingdoms.²⁵

Referring to all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, it meant outer or manifest splendor or wealth upon which Jesus had to make a choice either to give in to them as attractive as they were, or to stick to God.²⁶ But for Jesus, unlike the people of Israel who had failed to remain faithful to God because of wealth and other things like food, Jesus preferred remaining faithful to God.²⁷ After all, Jesus had possibilities of getting the wealth he wanted and even changing stones into bread was possible for him. But he did not have to do it at the command of Satan as if to prove to him that he could do it, which would mean using his powers for selfish reasons. For Jesus, God takes the first place, for he was convinced that food like all the other things were secondary needs since *one does not live by bread alone*.²⁸ What Jesus considered to be the primary thing to be held dear was the fact that one needs the word of God which gives hope and indeed life.²⁹ Giving priority to material things therefore would mean failing to love God with an undivided heart as required of Jesus at the risk of death.³⁰

²⁵ W. CARTER, *Matthew and the Margins*, 106.

²⁶ B.T. VIVIANO, "Matthew" *NJBC*, 638.

²⁷ B.T. VIVIANO, "Matthew" *NJBC*, 638

²⁸ W. BARCLAY, ed., *The Gospel of Matthew*, I, 67.

²⁹ See footnote on Matt 5:3-12 in the African Bible.

³⁰ B.T. VIVIANO, *NJBC*, 638.

Besides, Matthew presents the six antitheses where Jesus continues to elaborate the teaching of the new community, in such a way that he fulfills the law (Torah). This is not to be understood that the Torah had some areas that were not good. Rather in one way or another it had been misinterpreted. And so Jesus discourages some things that are not necessary as required of the Torah.³¹

With regard to this paper, one may wonder what this text has to do with the beatitudes as a matter of context. Scholars bring to light a point that as Jesus' teaching especially the beatitudes sounded controversial to many, he (Jesus) wanted to make it clear that he was faithful to the scriptures except to correct the misinterpretations that existed, thereby giving the vision of life compatible to God's kingdom.³²

Beare says that Jesus, in this text, makes it clear that he was faithful to the law of Moses only that different from Moses, he taught with authority. For there had been accusations from the opponents that he was not faithful to the scriptures since they could not understand things like a poor person being considered fortunate or blessed unlike the rich ones who were known to be the lucky ones.³³

b. Immediate Context

Concerning the immediate context before the text (Matt 5:3-10) as from 4:12-5:1-2, Matthew presents the beginning of Jesus' ministry in Galilee. Interestingly, Jesus did not do his ministry alone, but he called some people to work with him. And he first called the fisherman whom he saw casting a net into the lake. When Jesus called him to follow a different life with different values and structures that had nothing to do with his former

³¹ D.J. HARRINGTON, *The Gospel of Matthew: Sacra Pagina*, 92.

³² W. CARTER, *Matthew and the Margins*, 139-140.

³³ F.W. BEARE, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 138-139.

occupation, he followed him at once. That meant leaving his net and entrusting himself completely to Jesus who was to take care of him.³⁴ When Jesus saw the other fishermen, James the son of Zebedee and his brother John, he also invited them and they immediately left their boat nets and their father. That is, more than just leaving something economic, they also gave up their household obligations. It was something that was very important for them and indeed according to their tradition as a means of having long life (Exodus 20:12).³⁵ So they accepted poverty for the sake of Jesus but not because it was imposed on them neither by natural catastrophes nor by some other people.³⁶ In line with the leaving of their nets and their father, Matthew's Gospel makes a point that the disciples to detach themselves not only from material things but also from societal ties, even though they are to continue to participate within the socioeconomic structures.³⁷

Concerning the healings of the sick and those in pain, Carter deems it probable that those in pain could have been the victims of the imperial powers oppression and wars resulting from fighting for material and worldly wealth.³⁸

As regards the immediate contest after the text (Matt 5:11-16), Jesus reminds his disciples whom he now addresses directly in the second person, that by saying that they are happy or blessed, it does not mean that they are immune to harassment. Yet that harassment is to be viewed as God's favour rather than God's displeasure.³⁹

Commenting on salt and light, some scholars suggest that perhaps Jesus meant to rebuke Israel as a nation for having failed to fulfill their mission of spreading the

³⁴ W. CARTER, *Matthew and the Margins*, 120-123.

³⁵ W. CARTER, *Matthew and the Margins*, 120-123.

³⁶ W. CARTER, "Matthew 4:18-22 and Matthean Discipleship" *CBQ*, LIX, 58.

³⁷ W. CARTER, "Matthew 4:18-22 and Matthean Discipleship" *CBQ*, LIX, 58

³⁸ W. CARTER, *Matthew and the Margins*, 119-127.

³⁹ C.M. LAYMON, ed., *IOVCB*, 615.

knowledge of God to the Gentiles thereby bringing them to light.⁴⁰ The other commentators put their emphasis on the fact that Jesus is addressing his disciples that their blessedness as sharers of the kingdom is not only for their good and enjoyment alone. Rather, their privileges are to be put to use for the benefit of all the other people, and indeed, for the glory of God also. Jesus was already looking at the necessity of going beyond Israel to the Gentiles.⁴¹

Talking of salt, some commentators understood that salt in an actual sense cannot lose its saltiness. But if for example a spoon full of salt is poured in the sea, it will not do anything. Likewise, they suggest that Jesus was warning his disciples against being overwhelmed by the pleasures of the world. Otherwise, through the goodness of his disciples, Jesus was instructing them to inspire others by virtue of their examples.⁴² Other scholars hold that it is possible that Jesus was addressing the nation of Israel for having been given the knowledge about God, but instead of spreading to the others they kept it to themselves. And Jesus did not want that to go on, but to proclaim to others.⁴³

These commentators who hold that Jesus was addressing his disciples make sense because he was talking to the disciple whom he had just called as in Matt 4:18-22.

2.5 The Parallel Text Luke 6:20-23

Talking of the poor, Luke in his beatitudes is mainly concerned with real economic poverty. He is not concerned with the spiritual aspect of the poor, such that

⁴⁰ C.M. LAYMON, ed., *IOVCB*, 615.

⁴¹ F.W. BEARE, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 137.

⁴² C.M. LAYMON, ed., *IOVCB* 615.

⁴³ C.M. LAYMON, ed., *IOVCB*, 615.

they are blessed in so far as God takes special care for them.⁴⁴ Some say that Luke also means the poor in spirit, but Matthew puts it clearly to avoid misinterpretations.⁴⁵ Different from the Lukan beatitudes, which seem to reflect the outlook that poverty is based on material things, Matthew presents the spiritual condition based on the moral and spiritual qualities of those who receive the kingdom. That is while Matthew does not disagree with the fact that the poor in spirit are the needy people, he goes further in the sense that the poor in spirit are humble and detach themselves from material things hence putting all their trust in God who cares for them.⁴⁶

2.6 Form and Structure

a. Form

Matt 5:3-10 is a part of the sermon on the mount, it is a teaching to the disciples and the other people where Jesus shares with them God's vision of the life of the kingdom of heaven. So more than Moses therefore, Jesus taught with authority in this particular text. It is an authentic interpretation of God's will in the Torah, which was still hidden for many following the misinterpretations.⁴⁷

b. Structure

The text is arranged in such a way that there are *couplets* of statements. Each one of the eight beatitudes (5:3-10) consists of one statement that states one particular aspect of life that is blessed. The second statement presents the second part of the blessedness corresponding to the first one.⁴⁸ Matt 5:3-10 forms an inclusion in such a way that the

⁴⁴ See footnote commenting on Matt 5:3 in African Bible

⁴⁵ D.C. ALLISON, *Matthew*. 442-443.

⁴⁶ D.C. ALLISON, *Matthew*. 442-443.

⁴⁷ D.J. HARRINGTON, ed., *The Gospel of Matthew: Sacra Pagina*, 82

⁴⁸ F.W. BEARE, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 127.

promise of the first beatitude appears again in v. 10. That is, all the other beatitudes in between are concerned with the same people, the poor in spirit.⁴⁹

However, this text is divided into two groups. Interestingly, they are groups of equal verses in number. The first part is comprised of vv. 3-6. These four verses deal with those who are victims of the selfishness of the powerful elites who enrich themselves at the expense of the rest. These four verses therefore critique the distress that results from political, economic, social and religious oppression.⁵⁰

The other four verses (vv. 7-10) concern the actions of human beings that they make to express God's transforming kingdom to bring it to its completion. And because of those actions, they are honoured and esteemed in as far as the kingdom of heaven is concerned.⁵¹

2.7 Exegetical Analysis

Μακάριος means blessed or happy. Carter says that the word μακάριος is a very special word which was used in a very special way to describe the gods as happy. And so for Jesus to say that blessed or happy are the poor in spirit, he points to the idea that there is godly happiness which is God-like. That is, happiness which is different from the normal human happiness, in such a way that it refers to that happiness which does not depend on chances of life or that which is contingent.⁵² The idea of the happiness in the beatitudes being different and not dependent on chances of life makes sense. Otherwise, if Jesus was referring to the same happiness which human beings experience, then instead

⁴⁹ W. CARTER, *Matthew and the Margins*, 130-131.

⁵⁰ W. CARTER, *Matthew and the Margins*, 130-131.

⁵¹ W. CARTER, *Matthew and the Margins*, 130-131.

⁵² W. CARTER, *Matthew and the Margins*, 89.

of saying blessed are the poor in spirit, he would have been expected to say *blessed are the rich*, which would suit the logic of people.⁵³ Πτωχος refers to the poor, needy, those dependent on others and beggars.⁵⁴ By talking of the poor in spirit it does not mean that Matthew was trying to eliminate the fact that they lack some things from an economic point of view (Gal 2:10; Rom 15:26). Nevertheless, the poor were known to be people who had a special need of God's help, thereby being close to him. following this, the poor were referred to as God's people (Pss 12:5; 14:6; 22:24; 37:14; 69:29; 70:5; 86:1; 88:15; Isa 61:1; 10:2; 26:6; Ps5:2).⁵⁵

Allison speculates that it is possible that Matthew had in mind the Old Testament passage that God had promised salvation to the people such as the poor who are oppressed and captives (Isa 61:1-2). And so what Jesus said that the poor in spirit will be sharers of the kingdom is a confirmation. However, he (Allison) is not sure if Matthew had that in mind or not.⁵⁶ The qualification *in spirit* in addition to poor refers to the poor who unlike any other poor people acknowledge God's kingdom as a gift that one cannot obtain on his/her own.⁵⁷

ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν *Theirs is the kingdom of heaven*. It does not literally mean that the poor in spirit are the owners of the kingdom, neither will they own it even in the future. The kingdom remains God's. Instead they will be admitted to the kingdom of God. By referring to present tense ἐστὶν it does not mean that there is no element of the future. For the kingdom of God is in the future where there will be no

⁵³ D.C. ALLISON, *Matthew*, 442.

⁵⁴ D.C. ALLISON, *Matthew*, 443.

⁵⁵ D.C. ALLISON, *Matthew*, 443

⁵⁶ D.C. ALLISON, *Matthew*, 444-445.

⁵⁷ D.J. HARRINGTON, ed., *The Gospel of Matthew, Sacra Pagina*, 1, 78

poverty and oppression. However, Matthew could have used the present tense to emphasize the point that the kingdom of heaven is vivid to the poor in spirit. Moreover, it could have pointed out to the fact that the kingdom of heaven is present in some sense, much as their hearts were not attached to other things except God, thereby being confident rather than desperate.⁵⁸ The kingdom of heaven here refers to the reign of God. The word heaven is used to put emphasis on the eschatological meaning. Nevertheless the Jews used the words heaven and God interchangeably.⁵⁹

5:4 μακάριοι οἱ πενθοῦντες, *Blessed are those who mourn*. In this case those who mourn are to be primarily understood eschatologically. So, more than mourning because of suffering, it is seen to be grief over one's sins. On the other hand, the promise that follows this blessedness of mourning has already been fulfilled in Christians often comfort others (2Cor 1:4).⁶⁰ Mourning also suggests that the kingdom of heaven has not yet been fulfilled since God's people would not have to suffer if they are already in his kingdom.⁶¹

Carter says that those who mourn do so because they are victims of the imperial powers which oppress God's people. He links this to the example of Herod (2:18) where Rachel mourns for her children.⁶²

ὅτι αὐτοὶ παρακληθήσονται *They shall be comforted*. They shall be comforted in passive here refers to God himself who shall comfort those who mourn. The use of future *shall be* points to the time when God shall wipe away those things that bring about the

⁵⁸ D.C. ALLISON, *Matthew*, 448.

⁵⁹ D.J. HARRINGTON, ed., *The Gospel of Matthew: Sacra Pagina*, 78.

⁶⁰ F.W. BEARE, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 129-130.

⁶¹ D.C. ALLISON, *Matthew*, 448.

⁶² W. CARTER, *Matthew and the Margins*, 132. See also Beare, 129-130.

mourning which has to be in the world to come.⁶³ Where God will establish the justice of restored resources and have good relationships with each other thereby having sadness turned into joy (Isa 60:20;61:1-3).⁶⁴

5:5 μακάριοι οἱ πραεῖς, *Blessed are the meek*. Rather than mildness and gentleness as it was known in both Greek and Jewish worlds, Schweezer suggests that Matthew refers to the powerless in such a way that they accept their situation thereby being supported by God through the trials of wickedness around them.⁶⁵ Carter talks of the meek as those who are not only powerless but also humiliated. Yet they trust in God that he will save them whether he delays to do it or not they do not lose hope. Thus, they live faithfully in expectation that God will save them.⁶⁶

ὅτι αὐτοὶ κληρονομήσουσιν τὴν γῆν . *They will possess the earth*. κληρονομεω is to inherit but this verb is used in such a way that in the LXX it translates the verb שָׂרַי which means to possess or acquire.⁶⁷ So, the meek shall possess the land, which actually refers to the kingdom of God. The earth or land therefore is not to be understood literally as it was in the Old Testament where the Promised Land was Israel or the region promised to Abraham and his descendants (Gen 13:14).⁶⁸

5:6 μακάριοι οἱ πεινῶντες καὶ διψῶντες τὴν δικαιοσύνην, *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness*. Matthew uses the words hunger and thirst to emphasize the point that they seek above all else the kingdom and righteousness as though it is meat and drink which is sought habitually. And the meaning is not limited to

⁶³ D.C. ALLISON, *Matthew*, 448-449.

⁶⁴ W. CARTER, *Matthew and the Margins*, 132.

⁶⁵ D.C. ALLISON, *Matthew*, 449.

⁶⁶ W. CARTER, *Matthew and the Margins*, 133.

⁶⁷ D.C. ALLISON, *Matthew*, 449.

⁶⁸ F.W. BEARE, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 130.

passive longing but stretches to active seeking of righteousness (Ecclus 24:21-22).⁶⁹ Besides they are people who are hungry both inwardly and painfully lacking in things essential to life such that since they cannot satisfy themselves they turn to God. Referring to righteousness means those who seek to overthrow all the things that are opposed to God, they wish to attain the salvation of the saints so that divine justice is established.⁷⁰ This righteousness goes beyond the strictness of the law. But living in conformity with God's will.⁷¹

ὅτι αὐτοὶ χορτασθήσονται. *They shall be satisfied.* The future tense *they shall* refers to what Allison calls an eschatological tense in such a way that it points to the last day. The fact that they shall be satisfied points to a *divine passive*, for it is God who shall satisfy them.⁷²

5:7 μακάριοι οἱ ἐλεήμονες, *Blessed are the merciful.* ἐλεημων means merciful.⁷³ Mercy was first of all an attribute of God. And it is that same love that he expected people to extend to one another.⁷⁴ Matthew's Jesus put emphasis on mercy as something that ought to be shown to all including the enemies (5:43-48 cf. Luke 10:29-37). Mercy was something that had been forgotten or ignored by many. It is to be shown not only by actions but also should result from the inner feeling.⁷⁵

⁶⁹ D.C. ALLISON, *Matthew*, 451.

⁷⁰ D.C. ALLISON, *Matthew*, 452.

⁷¹ F.W. BEARE, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 130-131.

⁷² D.C. ALLISON, *Matthew*, 453.

⁷³ D.C. ALLISON, *Matthew*, 454-455.

⁷⁴ D.J. HARRINGTON, ed., *The Gospel of Matthew: Sacra Pagina*, I, 78.

⁷⁵ D.C. ALLISON, *Matthew*, 454-455.

ὅτι αὐτοὶ ἐλεηθήσονται. They will receive mercy has an eschatological tone. On the day of judgment, mercy will be shown to those who will have shown mercy.⁷⁶ And their actions that can even be seen outside correspond to their inmost beings in connection with their relationship with God.⁷⁷

5:8 μακάριοι οἱ καθαροὶ τῇ καρδίᾳ, Pure in heart is probably from Ps 24:3-4 *He who has clean hands and a pure heart*. Those are the ones who are not interested in showing their relationship with God to others. Rather, they are concerned with their private encounter with God. They are those who are single intentioned such that they desire to please God alone with undivided hearts.⁷⁸

ὅτι αὐτοὶ τὸν θεὸν ὄψονται. This promise refers not just to seeing God, but having a beatific vision of him. A privilege such as that of the angels. And that is to be in the world to come in the kingdom of God.⁷⁹ Otherwise it is not possible for human beings to see God face to face in the present world (Ex 3:6; 19:21; 33:20,23).⁸⁰

5:9 Μακάριοι οἱ εἰρηνοποιοί, *Blessed are the peacemakers*. This refers to the blessedness of those who seek to bring about peace. The peacemakers are not necessarily those who are peaceful but at least they promote peace actively as much as possible.⁸¹ This beatitude does not suggest any delimitation as to which particular sphere peace is to be evoked. Some commentators suggest that this beatitude could have probably been

⁷⁶ W. CARTER, *Matthew and the Margins*, 134.

⁷⁷ D.J. HARRINGTON, ed., *The Gospel of Matthew: Sacra Pagina*, I 78.

⁷⁸ D.C. ALLISON, *Matthew*, 455-456.

⁷⁹ D.C. ALLISON, *Matthew*, 455-456.

⁸⁰ W. CARTER, *Matthew and the Margins*, 135.

⁸¹ F.W. BEARE, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 79.

formulated during or after the revolution against Rome such that it is opposed to the revolution.⁸²

ὅτι αὐτοὶ υἱοὶ θεοῦ κληθήσονται. *For they shall be called sons of God.* Being passive that they shall be called sons of God refers to God who will call them his sons. Following Matt 5:45, the believers in Jesus are already children and sons of God whom they call their father. However, the use of future suggests that there is another level of sonship which will be in the eschaton and that level is twofold. First there will be a degree of intimacy with God which is not experienced on earth. Second there will be a greater likeness to God than it is while still on earth (cf. 5:48).⁸³ To bring peace about is to do what God does or rather to live like him and Jesus as well (5:48).⁸⁴

5:10 μακάριοι οἱ δεδιωγμένοι ἕνεκεν δικαιοσύνης, *Blessed are the persecuted righteous.* Here persecution may refer to physical violence or being abused verbally or both. The cause of the persecution is here presented as righteousness.⁸⁵

ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν. *Theirs is the kingdom is of heaven.* This is the same as 5:3b which is believed to mark an inclusion of the 8 beatitudes that are formed in the same way.⁸⁶

⁸² D.C. ALLISON, *Matthew*, 457-458.

⁸³ D.C. ALLISON, *Matthew*, 458-459.

⁸⁴ W. CARTER, *Matthew and the Margins*, 136.

⁸⁵ D.C. ALLISON, *Matthew*, 459-460.

⁸⁶ D.C. ALLISON, *Matthew*, 460.

2.8 Conclusion

In the beatitudes of Mathew (5:3-10) Jesus presents a teaching to his disciples, which is a vision of God's will for his people. Following the context of the text and its content, being poor in spirit is a summary of the life of the kingdom of heaven. Therefore those who wish to share in the kingdom of heaven are invited to be poor in spirit. It is out of being poor in spirit that one becomes gentle, righteous, merciful, pure of heart and a peacemaker. And so the whole text (Matt 5:3-10) refers to the same people whose different qualities Matthew presents in different beatitudes.

CHAPTER III

Theology, Message and Application of Spiritual Poverty

3.1. Introduction

Usually it is not automatic that whenever we read a certain text in the Bible we interpret it correctly. And that is why it is common that the Bible is often misinterpreted, especially if the interpreter has no idea about the context of the community to which it was written. This chapter is to take the task of finding out the message of Matt 5:3-10 to his community, the message to the contemporary Christians and to the Christians particularly living in Nairobi in the context of slums.

3.2 Theology and Message for the Matthean Community

Outside the context of the Matthean Jesus' teaching, the message of Matt 5:3-10 can easily be misunderstood. To enter into the world of Matthew therefore, calls for knowing the background of the community of Matthew.

Following the temptations that Jesus experienced during his forty days' fasting (4:1-10) it is clear that Satan tempted Jesus to shift his attention from God to material things. Satan thought that Jesus like any other human being would be attracted to worldly glory to the point of making him put God aside. But Jesus never gave in. For all the temptations are directed toward self-centeredness which Jesus was not ready to accept. Being aware that self-centeredness would alienate him from God, he deemed it better for

him to starve than to sin because of food.⁸⁷ Under this context, light is shed upon what was going on in the community of Matthew. As Carter puts it, since Satan claimed to be the owner of the kingdoms (4:8) it shows that he had managed to make most of the people, particularly in the Roman Empire, to think of themselves only seeking material things or power regardless of whether it was at the expense of others or not.⁸⁸ The people of Israel too had not managed to remain faithful because of worldly wealth thereby giving them the first place instead of God. Or rather, they had put wealth at the centre of their lives in as far as their interests were concerned. And all that was at the expense of some people.⁸⁹

In people's minds, it was thought that those who had wealth or power were not only fortunate, but also happy/blessed, while those who lacked material things and power were considered unfortunate since they were exposed to misery of different kinds.⁹⁰

However, the Matthean Jesus gives a message to the community which sounded controversial to many, since it did not conform to what people believed. So, what was known to be the source of happiness, he presented as a possible source of sadness. And what was known to be the cause for suffering and misfortune, Jesus presented as the source of happiness or blessedness.⁹¹

To begin with, the teaching in the text (5:3-10) is basically kingdom centered, such that for one to be happy or blessed, he/she has to qualify to be a sharer of the kingdom with or without material wealth or power. For the happiness that streams from

⁸⁷ J.B. MEIZ, *Poverty of Spirit*, 33.

⁸⁸ W. CARTER, *Matthew and the Margins*, 106.

⁸⁹ B.T. VIANO, "Matthew" *NJBC*, 638.

⁹⁰ D.C. ALLISON, *Matthew*, 442.

⁹¹ D.C. ALLISON, *Matthew*, 442.

the kingdom of heaven is higher than the one from the chances of life since the latter is open to destruction unlike the one of the kingdom of God.⁹²

Concerning the poor in spirit, the message for Matthew's community is that those who were needy, economically poor and dependent on others were happy in spite of their situation. Their happiness flows not just from the fact that they are poor, but because they put all their trust in God to the extent that their hope is all in him since they understand that they cannot rescue their own situation. And so, their hearts are attached to nothing else but God whereby, much as they surrender their own selves to God, they come to a very important discovery of their own selves. They find their hidden nature that is in God, and that is heaven as Metz puts it. Whereas, sticking to oneself, doing every thing with selfish interests is nothing else but putting oneself in hell, since by so doing, he/she loses his/her life.⁹³ However, the happiness of the poor in spirit in the present world is to be complete in the kingdom of heaven. Meanwhile, God takes care of them, so they do not need to be worried about what to eat or clothe themselves with. That is, Matthew's message could also have been that the kingdom of God is already present for the poor in spirit insofar as they are in pain but not desperate. Instead, they are confident and free from worries following their hope and trust in God.⁹⁴

As a matter of the message contained in the first four beatitudes in vv3-6, the poor in spirit are those who are needy and less privileged. They are the same people who mourn because of the oppression of the powerful Roman elites. Following their powerlessness therefore, they remain gentle and meek such that all that matters for them is that though hungry, they seek righteousness instead of limiting their minds to food or

⁹² W. CARTER, *Matthew and the Margins*, 89.

⁹³ J.B. METZ, *Poverty of Spirit*, 34.

⁹⁴ D.C. ALLISON, *Matthew*, 448.

wealth. And as a result of setting their hearts only on God and seeking to do his will, they shall be sharers of the kingdom and in some sense they are already in the kingdom, which qualifies them as happy or blessed.⁹⁵ For the kingdom of heaven is all about union with God primarily, but also with one another.⁹⁶

As regards the other four beatitudes in vv.7-10, the message is that the people shown as blessed are those who perform certain actions as a means to respond to the terrible situations of the people thereby trying to bring about God's kingdom.⁹⁷ And they are part of the poor in spirit insofar as they are not self-centered such that they can for example show mercy not only with feelings, but also mercy by action. Besides they concern themselves with things like trying their best to make sure that peace prevails. And that they do without showing off. Even when they encounter their God, they do not find interest in proving to others. In fact Metz puts it very well that the more the poor in spirit become close to God, the more they become close to man, such that the love of God and the love of neighbour go hand in hand. And so, poverty of spirit is preserved in one's relationship with other people.⁹⁸ However, much as they are concerned with the things of God which is contrary to what the rest do, they are exposed to danger of persecution. And because of all these actions they are to inherit the kingdom of heaven where they will receive mercy and as children of God they will see him which will be for their own consolation.⁹⁹

⁹⁵ D.C. ALLISON, *Matthew*, 448.

⁹⁶ From the Class Notes of Eschatology.

⁹⁷ W. CARTER, *Matthew and the Margins*, 130.

⁹⁸ J.B. METZ, *Poverty of Spirit*, 35-36.

⁹⁹ D.C. ALLISON, *Matthew*, 460.

3.3 Message for Contemporary Christians

In the situation of Matthew, the imperial elite oppressed the poor and inflicted pain on them.¹⁰⁰ Likewise, the world today is torn apart by a lot of situations where wealth is concentrated in the hands of few people causing suffering and poverty for the majority. There is continuous growth of selfishness such that some people can do anything destructive to others as a means to get what they want, be it material or power. For example we live in a world where wars have become so many with motives best known to those who wage them. The funny part of it is that most of the places where wars have been experienced are those areas where they have a lot of mineral materials. For instance the southern part of Sudan has experienced war for twenty years, and that is a place where there is oil which seems to have caused the fighting. In fact that oil has been referred to as *blood oil* following the genocide that it caused in the southern Sudanese communities.¹⁰¹

It is the same situation that the Iraqis went through. After America bombed Iraq, oil was seen to be their big deal following the statement of Samuelson who said that *the United States might also release oil from strategic reserves*.¹⁰² Besides wars in the world today, corruption is also increasingly becoming a problem such that people are developing tendencies of gathering wealth for themselves at the expense of others. Along the same line stealing is the song of the time.¹⁰³ This is just to mention but a few problems that people experience today. And as in the community of Matthew, all these leave so many in very poor and miserable situations. For example, war leaves so many as

¹⁰⁰ W. CARTER, *Matthew and the Margins*, 132.

¹⁰¹ C. OMOND, "US Giving Sudan a Fresh look," *Nation* (24 October 2003) 11.

¹⁰² R.J. SAMUELSON, "The Economic Impact of War" *Newsweek* (2nd December 2002)....

¹⁰³ B. OMANGA, "Central Bank Finds Stolen Millions" *Nation* (28 October 2003).

refugees, widows or widowers and orphans leaving them hungry, homeless, mourning and with nobody else worthy of trusting but God.¹⁰⁴ In cities like Nairobi where corruption is growing, the result is the growing numbers of slums.¹⁰⁵

The question of concern therefore is ‘what is Matthew’s Jesus telling us today?’ Matthew’s message today is that those who are rich today may claim to be happy and those who are needy and poor may think of themselves as unfortunate. But he reverses this understanding in such a way, that those who are blessed are those though they might be refugees or homeless or staying in the slums or AIDS patients they are blessed or happy. This is due to the situation where their position helps them to put all their trust in God hoping for his care for them. And so they ought to bring all their worries to him, seeking righteousness with undivided hearts. And that is what it means to be poor in spirit, which not every poor person is. Moreover, that is not only expected of those suffering or in want, but also the message is that for those who expect to be happy or to share in the kingdom of God one needs to be poor in spirit. The apostles who were called and left their nets for Jesus’ sake are an example of the poor in spirit.¹⁰⁶

Matthew’s message once more is that it is not wealth or power that makes someone happy or blessed. Rather, happiness consists in belonging to the kingdom of God. Indeed, those who are poor in spirit today will enjoy fully in the kingdom of heaven as a matter of future, but also insofar as they are free from the worries of the world.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ Author’s Interview with Mrs. Mary Mwewa who works with refugees at Guadalupe Parish where there is an organisation that helps to give food and to care for some of the simple needs as much as they can.

¹⁰⁵ A. ZANOTELLI, “A Grace Freely Given” *The Slums A Challenge to Evangelization*, 13.

¹⁰⁶ D.J. HARRINGTON, ed., *The Gospel of Matthew: Sacra Pagina*, I, 72.

¹⁰⁷ D.C. ALLISON, *Matthew*, 448.

3.4 Matthew's Message in the Context of the Slums in Nairobi

Nairobi is indeed a very beautiful city which, compared to other cities in Africa bears a good position in terms of having good buildings and posh estates within it.¹⁰⁸ On the contrary, it might be the worst city in the world with regard to the slums where people live in very poor conditions that one would find it difficult to believe. Fr. Alex Zanotelli rightly summarizes the situation of Nairobi city in a singly statement that it is *heaven and hell side by side*.¹⁰⁹

Statistically, Nairobi bears a population of four million people according to the habitat estimate of the American Embassy's data.¹¹⁰ And out of these 60% are forced to live in 1.5% of the total land of Nairobi. Moreover, 80% of those who dwell in the slums pay rent for the small miserable rooms where they stay. Thus, even the 1.5% of the land where they stay is not actually theirs with the exception of the 20% who stay in the slums within their own structures. The slums are places where all sorts of troubles can be found. For example, people there have no food since they do not possess land. Very few can manage to take their children to school. Diseases like AIDS, TB are part of their daily complaints. Above all, there is insecurity because of theft or robbery.¹¹¹ Fr. Alex who stayed in the slums of Nairobi (Korogocho) for fourteen years, in a single word refers to the slums of Nairobi as *hell*.¹¹²

On the other hand, in spite of tough conditions of poverty and misery in the slums, there are some people that qualify to be called poor in spirit depending on how they take life there. Some people there have surrendered their lives to God such that all

¹⁰⁸ A. ZANOTELLI, "A Grace Freely Given" *The Slums a Challenge to Evangelization*, 14.

¹⁰⁹ A. ZANOTELLI, "A Grace Freely Given" *The Slums a Challenge to Evangelization*, 13.

¹¹⁰ A. ZANOTELLI, "A Grace Freely Given" *The Slums a Challenge to Evangelization*, 13.

¹¹¹ Author's Interview with the people in Kibera as I go around visiting the terminally ill.

¹¹² A. ZANOTELLI, "A Grace Freely Given" *The Slums a Challenge to Evangelization*, 13.

their minds are only focused on God. It is actually unfortunate that when such people die, nobody is ready to follow their canonization process. For example in Kibera there was a man who had AIDS, but he was always very happy whether in sickness or not. He always said that Jesus healed him in spite of his poor health. He did a great job of encouraging the other patients AIDS. He visited them and even could cook for those who were bedridden. He often times went for retreats. Above all, he often spent nights in the chapel of perpetual adoration at Guadalupe Parish.¹¹³

There is another lady who has dedicated her life to the service of the sick especially those who are terminally ill. She is of course jobless and sickly. She is, so to say, a community health worker who goes around seeing who has which problem and then talks to some people who can give medicine. Sometimes she takes people to the hospital. Often she spends a day without lunch on account of service for others. So many people address her as a mother regardless of religion.¹¹⁴

Some people in Kibera are unable to even wake up from the bed yet they accept their situation with faith. For example Linet rather than mourning, she became so close to God, and very prayerful that she was ready to accept whatever God had in store for her. Often she would sing songs of praise on her death bed. Likewise, Fr. Alex also talks of the people in the slums teaching him how to pray although he was a priest. For instance he said that he was surprised and touched by the prayer of a young girl dying with AIDS as follows:

¹¹³ From an Interview with an AIDS patient that I visited as she was bedridden. The aim of the interview was to find out if she was having some one to take care of her. Surprisingly, it was Christopher Banangana another AIDS patient who was taking care of her although he was also weak.

¹¹⁴ From Sabina's experiences. She is a Community health Worker whom I have worked with for four years going around to visit the sick.

Baba, I know I am sick. But Baba, You can heal me. Please Baba, heal me!
I do not ask for myself, but for my little child (her son was standing by her)
He has nobody, only me! Baba, heal me! But if you do not want to heal me,
if you want me to come to you, here I am O Lord. Take me.¹¹⁵

Following these few examples of people who are poor yet with hearts detached from so many other things but attached to God, their qualities are closely related to those which Mattheew presents in the beatitudes. As mentioned already, they mourn and experience pain in one way or another. On the other hand, they are gentle, they seek righteousness, they show mercy to each other and they long to do God's will with undivided hearts. And as a result, much as they are free from many worries with their trust in God, they are happy or blessed. Strictly speaking though in the kingdom of God their happiness will be complete, they already have the taste of it since they are already in some way in union with God and their fellow people.¹¹⁶

3.5 Conclusion

In our daily lives great things happen to us, and when they do, people congratulate us telling us that we are lucky ones. When misfortunes come our way, people sympathise with us telling us things like 'you are unfortunate. That is how we view things from the point of view of common sense. However, in light of this chapter we come to learn that those whom we consider as unfortunate are in most cases the blessed ones.

¹¹⁵ A. ZANOTELLI, "A Grace Freely Given" *The Slums a Challenge to Evangelization*, 17.

¹¹⁶ D.C. ALLISON, *Matthew*, 448.

4. GENERAL CONCLUSION

Spiritual poverty is like a diamond that is wrapped in a dirty newspaper placed somewhere such that when people look at it, they do not get any interest in it. They bypass it looking for what they consider to be important. But when one discovers that there is diamond in the newspaper, he/she forgets about all the other things and sets all his/her heart on it as long as it is able to take care of his needs. And most likely, those to discover that there is diamond in the newspaper are those who go around picking rubbish especially the street children whom society sees as worthless.

In our human life and especially as Christians, we have heard about and have read about spiritual poverty as a means to the kingdom. Unfortunately the use of the word poverty discourages many from even seeking to understand what it is all about. Yet those who are considered as lowly are the ones who have discovered its treasure which has become a source of their happiness and blessedness. And following their discovery, their hearts are no longer attached to other things with or without them but to the hidden treasure. It is therefore wise that everybody may seek not just poverty, but poverty in the spirit.

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APPENDIX 2: Abbreviations

ABD	Anchor Bible Dictionary
CBQ	Catholic Bible Quarterly
DBC	The Definitive Bible Commentary
HBD	Harper's Bible Dictionary
IBC	Interpreter's Bible Commentary
IOVCB	The Interpreters One Volume Commentary on the Bible
NBD	New Bible Dictionary
NJBC	New Jerome Bible Commentary
TDNT	Theological Dictionary of the New Testament
Ex	Exodus
Matt	Matthew
Isa	Isaiah
Deut	Deuteronomy
Mic	Micah
Lev	Leviticus
Jer	Jeremiah
Zaph	Zephaniah

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