

Feasting on Gratitude

Stewardship Reflection Series

Blessed are the poor in Spirit...



The Sermon on the Mount contains many of the sayings of Jesus that we say we believe in, but we don't really believe in them. Did you really hear what he said in the Beatitudes: "Blessed are the poor in spirit"? Or would you rather hear the version of it in St. Luke's gospel which puts it more bluntly, "Blessed are the poor..." Well, I've been poor, and I've been poor in spirit, and I can honestly tell you that I didn't feel very blessed in either of those states! There was a brief time in my life when I didn't have the money to buy a decent meal, when I had to go downtown in the city where I lived to give blood for money, sitting embarrassed in a run-down room along with all the other poor souls there, where we couldn't look each other in the eye. This is what being poor does to you. Blessed?

My parents could tell you something about being brought up poor. They don't want to return to those days, believe me. And yet, there was something about the simplicity of those times for them that they miss, when they knew that they would be all right if they could just "keep on keeping on," even in the face of injustice and material deprivation. They migrated from the poverty and virulent racial segregation of rural North Carolina to Washington, DC in 1951, searching for a way to live their lives in dignity despite their dark skins. They came to that urban environment with nothing. Well, they did have one thing: faith. Faith in God, faith in themselves, and faith that if they risked everything they had in order to seek a better life for themselves and their children here, then something good would happen. So with little money, little formal education, and zero connections in the nation's capital, they worked and prayed and saved and prayed and persevered and really prayed and invested their energies to succeed in their jobs. They raised my brother and me to do the same in our own way. Their values are my values. They have been incredible role models for me in how to live this life, and while not rich or famous in the world's terms, they are the most successful people I know. There were many rough times for them, I know, but in those moments at their darkest hours, I know that our Lord came to them in the middle of many fearful nights, telling and consoling them, "Do not fear. Trust in me, do the right thing. Things will be okay." And they prevailed.



Poor? Check. Poor in spirit? Check... meaning that they had a humble sense of their own righteousness before God. And in giving everything they could back to God and to others, they lived Christian stewardship.

Were they "blessed?" Check.

Rt. Rev. Eugene Taylor Sutton
Bishop
The Episcopal Diocese of Maryland

Reflection Questions

1. How do you trust in God's faithfulness, especially during difficult times?
2. How do you express gratitude to companions on the way who have nurtured you in your faith journey?