

**TFTD Lent 2025.07 Wednesday March 12th
Blessed are the poor ... Luke 6.20-49**



The sermon on the mount in Matthew's Gospel keeps everything positive. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for example, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. The equivalent text in Luke's Gospel is the so-called sermon on the plain. There are the poor again: 'Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God'. But a bit later on Jesus says this; "But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.'

Why did he have to say that? It is as if he is deliberately trying to stir up trouble and division. Why can't the rich be blessed along with the poor? Why does it have to be a zero-sum game?

In recent days the government has announced how it will pay for increased military spending. It turns out that it is a zero-sum game. Money for weapons has to be taken off somebody's budget and it turns out the poor will be made to pay. First the overseas aid budget was raided and yesterday the government announced it will slash billions from the welfare budget.

Welfare payments will be reduced but the government says this will be a good thing because it will incentivise people to work. Speaking of people who are currently not working and receiving welfare payments, the Prime Minister said, "It runs contrary to those deep British values that if you can work, you should. And if you want to work, the government should support you, not stop you."

To illustrate what he might be talking about, here is a picture of somebody who is not working, looking out over a city full of people working. Could she work, do you think?

He went on to say, "This is the Labour party. We believe in the dignity of work and we believe in the dignity of every worker, which is why I am not

afraid to take the big decisions needed to return this country to their interests whether that's on welfare, immigration, our public services or our public finances.”

What strikes me about this last statement is that the Prime Minister is claiming that it somehow takes great courage to attack the interests of poor people, reducing welfare payments and cutting the public services upon which they depend. I wonder why the Prime Minister thinks this takes great courage and, if he really thinks it takes great courage, I wonder how he found this courage.

I think one of the values buried deep in our national culture is an idea of the Kingdom of God – an idea of how the world should be and how the world will one day be. We could call this a British value; it is certainly a Christian value. And in the Kingdom of God the poor will be blessed. The Kingdom will no longer serve the interests of the rich at the expense of the poor.

I think the Prime Minister is afraid of many things. He is afraid to take on the interests of the rich, that is why there is no wealth tax and the

share of the nation's wealth owned by the super-rich continues to grow. But he is also afraid of acting against the Kingdom of God. He says he is not afraid, but often, when people say they are not afraid of something, all they are doing is naming the fear they are feeling.

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