Sermon on the Mount, part 6

“Blessed Are the Pure in Heart”

Scripture: Matthew 5:8

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Jesus Concerned About Our Heart

The first thing we learn from this beatitude is that Jesus is concerned with our heart.

Jesus said,

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites for you cleanse the outside of the cup and of the plate, but inside they are full of extortion and rapacity. You blind Pharisee! First cleanse the inside of the cup and of the plate, that the outside also may be clean.” (Matthew 23:25–26)

The aim of Jesus Christ is not to reform the manners of society, but to change the hearts of sinners like you and me.

The heart is what you are, in the secrecy of your thought and feeling, when nobody knows but God.
And what you are at the invisible root matters as much to God as what you are at the visible branch.

"Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7).

From the heart are all the issues of life.

• Jesus said, “What comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart . . . For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a man.” (Matthew 15:18–19)

• Jesus said, “Either make the tree good, and its fruit good; or make the tree bad, and its fruit bad; for the tree is known by its fruit . . . For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.” (Matthew 12:33-34)

• So the heart is utterly crucial to Jesus. (Matthew 12:33–34)

• What we are in the deep, private recesses of our lives is what he cares about most.
• Jesus did not come into the world simply because we have some bad habits that need to be broken.

• He came into the world because we have such dirty hearts that need to be purified.

My own conviction is that the fundamental problem in American society and culture is that we attempt to solve human problems while neglecting the centrality of God in the life of the soul.

We are so bombarded by human tragedies of poverty and crime and abuse and neglect and war and the manifold injustices of man to man, that we are tempted to agree with the world that it is useless pie in the sky by and by to be concerned with whether the soul will ever see God.

But this is the greatest of all tragedies—that in seeking to relieve the temporal miseries of man we set aside the centrality of God.

When will we ever see: we can’t merely wash the outside of the cup…we need a radical reorientation of the heart…all of us!

But Jesus comes to us this morning and says, "Blessed are the pure in heart," not first because they change society, but first because they will see God.
Seeing God is the great goal of being pure.

Abandon that goal and human culture collapses into ruin.

**Three Questions This Morning**

So let's ask briefly in the moments we have,

1. What is it to see God?
2. What is it to be pure in heart?
3. And, how are these two things bound together?

**1. What Is It to See God?**

I would mention three things.

a. First, to see God means to be admitted to his presence.

After the plague of darkness on Egypt, Pharaoh exploded to Moses with these words:

"Get away from me; take heed to yourself; never see my face again; for in the day you see my face you shall die." Moses said, "As you say! I will not see your face again." (Exodus 10:28–29)
When a king says, "You will never see my face again," he means, "I will never grant you admission again into my presence."

- In the same way we call the doctor today and say, "Can I see Dr. Robinson today?"
- We don't mean, Can I see him from a distance. Or, Can I see a picture of him?
- We mean, Can I have an appointment to be with him?

So the first thing seeing God means is being admitted to his presence.

Next, to see God means:

b. Second, seeing God means being awestruck by his glory—by a direct experience of his holiness.

After God confronted Job in the whirlwind, Job said,

"I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees thee; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

- Virtually all of our spiritual sight in this life is facilitated to us through the Word of God or the work of God in providence.
• We "see" images and reflections of his glory.
• We hear echoes and reverberations of his voice.
• But there will come a day when God himself will dwell among us. His glory will no longer be inferred from lightning and mountains and roaring seas and constellations of stars.
• Instead our experience of him will be direct.
• His glory will be the very light in which we move (Revelation 21:23) and the beauty of his holiness will be tasted directly like honey on the tongue.

The Glory of the New Jerusalem

22 But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. 23 The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light. 24 And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it. 25 Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there). 26 And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it.

• So seeing God means not only a) being admitted to his presence, b) but also being awestruck by a direct experience of his glory.

Next, to see God means:

b. Finally, seeing God means being comforted by his grace.
Again and again the psalmists cry out to God that he not hide his face from them. For example in Psalm 27 (verses 7–9) David says,

\[
\text{Hear, O Lord, when I cry aloud,}
\]
\[
\text{be gracious to me and answer me!}
\]
\[
\ldots \text{Hide not thy face from me.}
\]

"Hide not thy face from me," is the same as saying, "Be gracious to me!"

This means that seeing the face of God is considered to be a sweet and comforting experience.

If God shows his face, we are helped.

If he turns his face away, we are dismayed.

So when Jesus promises the reward of "seeing God" there are at least these three things implied:

- We will be admitted to his presence, not just kept in the waiting room.
- We will be awestruck with a direct experience of his glory.
- And we will be helped and comforted by his grace.
And this we will have—in part now, and fully in the age to come—if we are pure in heart.

2. What Is It to Be Pure in Heart?

Søren Kierkegaard wrote a book called *Purity of Heart Is to Will One Thing*.

That is not a bad definition, provided that the one thing we will is the glory of God.

Let me note right at the outset: Purity of Heart does not imply:

- Sinless perfection as some have promoted
- Nor does it suggest faultless or flawless motives and behaviors…if that were the case, none of us would ever see God!
- Neither did Jesus mean the intellect! – not the head – not mere doctrines and beliefs – not a mere mechanical interest in the Word of God.

And what is the **HEART**?

- Simply stated, the heart is the “**center of personality**”
• The heart is the fount of which everything else comes…
• The heart is the mind, will and emotions all wrapped into one.
• The heart is the total man.
• Everything starts in the heart!

According to David
Let me try to show you where that definition comes from in Scripture. We start with the closest OT parallel to this beatitude, namely, Psalm 24:3–4.

Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord?

\[
\text{And who shall stand in his holy place?}
\]

\[
\text{He who has clean hands and a pure heart,}
\]

\[
\text{who does not lift up his soul to what is false,}
\]

\[
\text{and does not swear deceitfully.}
\]

You can see what David means by a "pure heart" in the phrases that follow it.

• A pure heart is a heart that has nothing to do with falsehood. It is painstakingly truthful and free from deceitfulness.
• Deceit is what you do when you will two things, not one thing.
• You will to do one thing and you will that people think you are doing another.
• You will to feel one thing and you will that people think you are feeling another.
• That is impurity of heart.

• **Purity of heart is to will one thing, namely, to "seek the face of the Lord"** (verse 6).

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**According to James**

You can see this idea of purity in James 4:8.

“Draw near to God and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you men of double mind.”

Notice that just like Psalm 24 there is reference to both clean hands and a pure heart as preparation for drawing near to God, or "ascending the hill of the Lord."

But notice how the men are described who need to purify their hearts: "**men of double mind.**"

That is, they are men that will two things not just one thing.

The impurity of double-mindedness is explained in James 4:4.
“Unfaithful creatures, Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”

So the double-minded man of verse 8 has his heart divided between the world and God, like a husband who has a wife and a girlfriend.

Purity of heart on the other hand is to will one thing, namely, full and total allegiance to God.

From Jesus' Mouth

So if we ask, Where in the gospels did Jesus explain purity of heart in this way? the answer would be Matthew 22:37,

37 Jesus said to him, “‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’[d] 38 This is the first and great commandment. 39 And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’[e] 40 On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart.

Not with part of your heart.

Not with a double or divided heart. That would be impurity.
Purity of heart is no deception, no double-mindedness, and no divided allegiance.

Purity of heart is to will one thing, namely, God's truth and God's value in everything we do.

The aim of the pure heart is to align itself with the truth of God and magnify the worth of God.

If you want to be pure in heart, pursue God with utter single-mindedness. “I won’t relent till you have it all, my heart is yours.”

Purity of heart is to will that one thing: single minded, undivided allegiance to God --- no mixture

Pure Gold

John Wesley – Methodist Revival focused on Holiness of heart and life. In a treatise called, “The character of a Methodist,” Wesley explained purity of heart...

10 For the Methodist is “pure in heart.” The love of God has purified their heart from all vengeful passions, from envy, malice and wrath, from every unkind temper or malign
affection . . . so that they “forbears and forgives, if they had a quarrel against any; even as God in Christ has forgiven them” . . . For “all their desire is unto God, and to the remembrance of God’s name.”

Agreeable to this one desire, is the one deign of their life, namely, “not to do their own will, but the will of God that sends them.” The Methodist’s own intention at all times and in all things is, not to please themselves, but God whom their soul loves. . . . God then reigns alone. All that is in the soul is holiness to the Lord. . . . Every thought that arises points to God, and is in obedience to the law of Christ.

That leaves one last question:

3. How Are the Two Bound Together? Purity and Heart

And of course that leads every sensitive soul to cry out with the words of Proverbs 20:9,

"Who can say, 'I have made my heart clean; I am pure from my sin?"

And with the disciples: "Who then can be saved?"

Jesus' answer comes back just like it did to the disciples in Matthew 19:26—and this is the rest of the answer—

"With men it is impossible, but with God all things are possible."
In other words, God creates a purity for us and purity in us so that we can pursue purity.

And by his grace we must seek that gift by praying with David, "Create in me a clean heart, O God" (Psalm 51:10).

God, please create in me an undivided heart; a single minded heart of devotion.

And we must look to Christ "who gave himself for us . . . to purify for himself a people" (Titus 2:14).

And the response of our hearts to God's act of creation and Christ's act of sacrifice is single-minded faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

God is the one who purifies the heart, and the instrument with which he cleans it is faith. Therefore, trust in the Lord with ALL your heart (Proverbs 3:5).

- All efforts at self-cleansing are doomed!
• We cannot clean up ourselves any more than a dog can clean himself. Wash the dog and the dog will just run to the dirt again and roll around in it.

• All I can do is realize the blackness of my heart as it is by nature and cry out, “Create in me a clean heart and renew a right spirit within me.”

• It is God alone who can clean our hearts – wash our hearts – purify our hearts – and THANK GOD he promised to do it!

• The only way in which we can have clean heart is for the Holy Spirit to cleanse us; to enter into us and cleanse us from within, scrubbing us from within.

• That is our only hope!
• We are in His hands and the process is ongoing.
• God is dealing with us and our hearts are being cleansed!

**But we are not passive!**

• James says, “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you!”
• How is God going to draw near to us?
  o We draw near to God!
• How do We draw near to God so that He may purify us?
  o Through searching the Scriptures
  o Through prayer and worship
  o Through surrender and agreement
  o Through commitment and decision
  o By laying aside every sin that so easily clings to us.
  o By being single minded and devoted to ONE THING!

Will this one thing. And you will see God.

**What is the so what?**

Christ followers in this new realm of the Kingdom of God are pure in heart and they are fully devoted to God in heart and life.

Heaven invades our hearts

We see God!

This is the blessed life!