

The Beatitudes: Pure in Heart

Intro: Good morning! Before starting, I'd like to thank you all for: I do consider it a privilege to stand here this morning to bring the message and I pray that....

We're continuing our series on the Beatitudes; the blessings, which is part of Jesus' first recorded message, we often refer to as "The Sermon on the Mount."

What I find so amazing is that there is just so much depth in his message (so many nuggets of truth), that when Jesus spoke these words 2000 years ago, I often wonder how those first hearers processed it. Can you imagine being there on that hillside hearing the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth piercing the air with God's eternal truth about this new and different kingdom? The words he spoke were radical!

It is the exact opposite of this world's kingdom and the way it works: A kingdom where the poor and lowly receive rewards, where the meek are exalted; where goodness reigns over evil and injustice. It really is an upside down kingdom/ opposite world.

At the end of his message (Matt. 7:28), it gives us a hint at what it was like. "The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority. Other translations use the word, astonished. The Amplified Bible adds: and overwhelmed. (I doubt that after this message you will be astonished...probably underwhelmed).

The portion that we will be focusing on today are these 11 words:

Matthew 5:8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God."

This morning, we're going to examine this closely to see what Jesus meant when He said this and then look at it from two different perspectives: What it means Ultimately and what it means now.

PRAY

Concordant literal translation of this verse is: *"Happy are the clean in heart for they shall see God"* Today, we're going to examine the 3 parts of this sentence,

Blessed/Happy=

Pure (clean) in heart=

They shall see God= ...to explore what they mean. And then apply it to our lives.

Blessed/ Happy= "Joyousness springing from within"...that sounds really good!

- Everyone is searching for happiness, for meaning, for fulfillment.
- The one who created us knows exactly what will bring us blessing and happiness and joy. He knows us intimately.

EX: Like a car manufacturer who designs the car knows how to maintain it and get maximum performance and longevity, so He too knows what's best for us!

- He knows that it comes from within. It doesn't come from external circumstances; it doesn't come from material possessions; it doesn't come from our accomplishments or even our relationships; as great as those may be.
- True joyousness springing from within can only come from our relationship with God.

EX: Like Adam and Eve in the garden, who enjoyed the presence of God fully each day as they walked in the garden talking with God. I'm sure it was the epitome of happiness and fulfillment **UNTIL** something became a barrier between them and God.

In all relationships, there are things they may come between and serve to weaken the relationship.

EX: Like when a husband and wife are in an argument... (BTW, my wife and I never argue!!!....)

- With God, sin is the thing that causes there to be a separation between us and God and therefore, our own joy.
 - *"There is no one righteous, not even one." Romans 3:10*
 - *"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Romans 3:23*
 - *"The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure (incurable). Who can know it? -Jeremiah 17:9*

Pure in Heart= So what does this mean to be pure in heart? At first we may have this picture in our heads of someone who is completely innocent/perhaps even naive. Maybe someone who is young or has been sheltered from the garbage in this world. Someone without malice or deceit. **EX:** little child and sinful nature

Katharos (GRK)=pure, clean, transparent-like a glass of water with all of the contaminants filtered out untainted by anything impure!

BUT if our hearts are beyond cure, how can we ever attain this purity of heart? It sounds pretty hopeless! (compared to the other Beatitudes...)

- We can be poor in spirit

- We can certainly mourn; that comes naturally,
- There are certainly people who are meek
- We can show mercy
- **BUT**, Who can make their heart pure? When scripture says it's incurable!

Proverbs 20:9 Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I have kept my heart pure?

Let's go over what it is not:

- It is not about anything external
 - It's not about external appearances.
 - It's not about the religious activities we participate in.
 - It's not about our acts of charity... (Although those things might reflect an inner purity of heart.)
 - It's not about rigidly following rules of conduct. EX: Legalistic church more concerned with what activities you don't do! (It makes sense that we tend to focus on things we can see. It's more difficult to see pride, selfishness, jealousy, lust.)

There are some people who are super conscious of what they put in their bodies.

- It's not about following dietary rituals or eating healthily. It's not what goes into a man, but what comes out.
- Jesus said: *"For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander."* Matt. 15:19.
- We can certainly look good and spiritual on the outside for others, but God sees our hearts, our motives, our thoughts.

Now, in context. When they heard this for the first time, they were conditioned to think about external cleanliness. All of the ceremonial washings they had to participate in to come to God. **But Jesus' changed all that!**

- The author of Hebrews, highlights the difference between outward and inward cleanliness: *"The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offer himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so we may serve the living God!"* Hebrews 9:13-14. **Thank you Lord!**
- Remember what Jesus said of the very religious Pharisees: *"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean. Ouch!"*
- Unlike the message from Pastor Jim on showing mercy, which you can show visibly, purity of heart is something that cannot necessarily be seen.
- Pure in heart means
 - that we have a clean conscience before God;
 - our past sins have been wiped away by the blood of Jesus
 - and our thought life and our will are fully submitted to God.

- When we are pure in heart, we have joyousness springing from within! (It's like when we first experienced God's forgiveness through His son Jesus. It's as though a heavy weight had been lifted from our hearts.)

Why? This has to do with the last phrase

See God= There is a correlation between the cleanliness of our hearts and our ability to see a holy God; to have a relationship with him. **God is so holy, that he can't be in the presence of anything unholy.**

This concept is throughout Scripture:

from Moses covering his face when God passed in front of him because he is holy.

"Show me your glory." "You cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live." Ex. 33:20

To the NT:

Hebrews 12:14 "Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.

To Revelation, predicting *the end of time* (when our salvation is complete!)

No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and the Lamb will be in the city and his servants will serve him. They will see His face and his name will be on their foreheads. Rev. 22:3,4

Therefore, we, in our normal state are separated from God because he cannot be in the presence of anything unholy. *"I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." John 3:3*

"Sin separates us from God, Purity brings closeness"

Isaiah 59:2 "Your iniquities have separated you from your God' your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear."

"Sin clouds our ability to see God; to experience God, because he is holy." It's like there's something between us.

EX: .When my wife and I are in an argument, there is something between us that prevents us from being together. Even though we're still in the same house and sleep in the same bed, it's like she's distant, like she's miles away.

So what does this mean for you and I? **How can we attain this purity of heart? Let's look at it from two perspectives, in the future and then, today.**

Then (in the future): It means we will one day see Jesus face to face!

Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.” -I Corinthians 13:12

This is based, not on our permanent record of good and bad, but on the blood of Jesus, through which God sees us. We are perfect through Christ.

So ultimately...in the long term:

The pure in heart will see God, because God has made our hearts pure. Hurrah!

We will certainly have “joyousness springing from within” when we see Jesus!!!

It will be worth it all, when we see Jesus. Life’s trials will seem so small, when we see Christ. One glimpse of his dear face, all sorrow will erase. So bravely run the race, till we see Christ.

Today: What about now? Is it just talking about some future kingdom when our salvation is complete? No. It’s also talking about the here and now!

It’s in some ways, easier to trust in God’s promises in some distant future, but more difficult to trust in them in our present circumstances.

Just like when Jesus told Martha that her brother Lazarus would rise again and she replied “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day” I can just picture Jesus putting his arm around Martha and saying of course that’s true...BUT *“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live even though he dies; and whoever lives in me will never die!”*

The Kingdom of God is certainly a paradox! The kingdom will find its fulfillment in the last days, but it is also being revealed in the here and now!

And this Beatitude reveals another paradox: That has to do with our condition
In one sense, because of the sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross we are perfect. .
When we acknowledge our guilt before him and place our trust in him, God sees us through the blood of Jesus, making us perfect. Thank God for his mercy and grace!
But in another sense, we are woefully imperfect.

We are a mixed bag of good and evil...of faith and doubt...of devotion and complacency.

Here is an interesting verse that I believe helps resolve this paradox:

“Because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.”
Hebrews 10:14

- We are all in the divide between where we were and who God wants us to be.
- We are in the process of being conformed to the image of the son.
- We are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works...

There is a relationship between the content of our heart and our relationship with God

- When there is impurity in our hearts, we don’t see God clearly; we don’t see him properly or as we should.

If you have never acknowledged your sins before our Holy God and repented of those sins, you really don’t see God clearly. You may understand the concept of God and understand the basics of the Christian faith, but there is a filter preventing you from seeing him clearly. There is a veil preventing you from fully seeing him.

How many of you know that If you are a believer, you have the Holy Spirit of God living in you???

AND God by His Holy Spirit is making us into the person he wants us to be

He, by His very presence, makes us holy...It’s in His name!!! So we might pause and ask: If making our hearts pure is the work of the Holy Spirit, what does that have to do with you or I? Can’t we just merrily coast along, without regard to our thoughts or actions?

BUT, if we think that, aren’t we really saying that it’s God’s fault when we sin? **EX:** Grant’s prayer “Jesus, help me not be naughty!” We have a role to play.

“Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.” James 4:8

We are the caretakers of our own hearts. It is up to us to monitor it, to sense when there’s something not right, to renounce and confess it before God. To **let** the Holy Spirit do his work in us.

If we allowed the Holy Spirit 100% control of our lives 100% of the time, we would be perfect.

Conclusion:

King David allowed something to come between himself and God. The sins against Bathsheba and her husband were really sins against God and it drove a wedge between them. In Psalm 51, he cries out:

- “Have mercy on me, O God according to your unfailing love”
- “Blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.” **Recognizing the separation this has caused, he prays:**
- V10-12 *“Create in me a pure heart, O God and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit to sustain me.*

This prayer contains the essence and 3 parts of the Beatitude we discussed today.

Perhaps the condition of our hearts is not even on our radars all that often. We’ve been forgiven by the blood of Jesus, so we think we are good to go. We do our religious duty; we pray, go to church, pay our tithes and offerings, sing in worship and lift our hands. **but...**

When we have unconfessed sin, bitterness, jealousy, lust, pride, selfishness, impure thoughts, discord, idolatry in our hearts, there is a level of separation between ourselves and God. And we are not happy. **BUT...**When our hearts are pure and everything is well with our relationship with God, we have joyousness springing from within.

We need to daily consider our relationship with our Father. EX: Like the old *Godspell* song: *Day by day....* Or like the Psalmist: Search me, God, and know my heart;

test me and know my anxious thoughts.

See if there is any offensive way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.

Perhaps what may be causing a separation is ourselves. We fill our heart with our own worries and needs and anxieties and it clouds our ability to see God in it

Keith Green song: “Make my life a prayer to you, I wanna do what you want me to. No empty words and no white lies. No token prayers, no compromise. Verse 2 I wanna thank you now for being patient with me. Oh it's so hard to see, when my eyes are on me .

We can do all these things and still have something in our hearts, quietly doing damage to our relationship with God; like a cancer that is not easily detected until it has done great harm.

Church, it is vital that we daily guard our hearts, that we daily examine our hearts;. And if there is anything that shouldn't be there, it is vital that we repent of it and allow the Holy Spirit to cleanse up and make us pure