

I invite you to open your bibles this morning to today's scripture text which can be found in Matthew, the 5th chapter, verses 1 – 9. This is our sixth week in our seven-week series on the beatitudes, Jesus's sermon on the mount. Today our focus is on the Pure in Heart.

Mt 5:1-9 5 Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, 2 and he began to teach them, saying:

3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

5 Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.

7 Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.

NIV

We see what we choose to see. We see things the way we want to *see them*, and view them in a way that suits us best in the moment or in our current situation, which allows us to live the way we want to live. This can be life in the holy presence of God, or basking in our own self-glory. The choice is ours. We see things, with human eyes, and we look at outward appearances. Do we see ourselves or do we see our living God? Our Lord God told Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." (1 Sa 16:7) As we discovered last week, mercy, **Che'sedh**, the ability to get right inside the other persons skin until we can see with their eyes, think things with their mind, and feel things with their feelings. We learned about seeing things in their proper perspective. A relational perspective that focuses on God's love, and the condition of our heart. A way to see, think, and feel with our hearts. A way to develop the purity of our hearts. In Mt 5:8 **Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.** Our beatitude for today continues with matters of relationships, where the first thing that we learn is that Jesus is very concerned about the condition of our hearts. It's not enough to clean up your act on the outside. You can hear him saying later, Mt 23:25-26 **"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. 26 Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.**

This beatitude demands that any person who reads it should stop, and think, and do a very close self-examination. The aim of Jesus Christ is not to simply reform the matters of society. The aim of Jesus is to transform sinners. Individual people from the inside out. He is very concerned with the heart. For example, Jesus would not at all be satisfied with a society where there were absolutely no *acts* of adultery. Because he has said (Mt 5:27-29) 27 "You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' 28 But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

The heart is *what you are* in the secrecy of your thoughts, and your feelings, when no one knows except God. That's your heart, and what you are at ***that invisible root*** is just as important, I think we could say more important, to the Lord, than what you are at the visible branch where the fruit of your life emerges. "Man looks on the outward appearance," God said to Samuel, but God looks on the heart. Where, from the heart, are all the issues of life. So, our Lord Jesus says (Mt 12:33-34) 33 "Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit. 34 You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.

Then Jesus tells us, (Mt 15:13-20) 13 He replied, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots. 14 Leave them; they are blind guides. If a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a pit." 15 Peter said, "Explain the parable to us." 16 "Are you still so dull?" Jesus asked them. 17 "Don't you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body? 18 But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man 'unclean.' 19 For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. 20 These are what make a man 'unclean'; but eating with unwashed hands does not make him 'unclean.'"

So, it's clear, that the condition of the heart is utterly crucial to the Lord Jesus. Where what we are *inside* where nobody knows what's going on but God, and sometimes you. He did not come into the world to help us break bad habits, he came into this world to clean our dirty hearts.

In a book written about a century ago, by Soren Kierkegaard, a Danish thinker, philosopher; his main theme, and the title is "Purity of Heart is to will one thing" that is a good definition of Biblical purity. Let's look at scripture to see why that is a good definition, provided the one thing you will, is the glory of God. Psalm 24 is probably the closest old testament parallel to this beatitude. Psalm 24, lets read versus 3 and 4. See if you can figure out what the psalmist means by a pure heart. Verse 3; Who may ascend the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place? 4 He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false.

So the definition of a pure heart? One who does not lift up his soul to an idol, or swear by what is false.

What exactly is a *pure* heart then? A pure heart is a heart that has nothing to do with falsehood, see that? "...who does not lift up his soul, delight in, or go after, or depend on, what is false. Secondly, a pure heart is painstakingly truthful and free from deceit. What is a heart doing when it deceives? It is willing to do one thing, and it is willing that people think it's doing another thing. It is willing to feel one thing, and willing that people not know that it is feeling this. It is deceitful and thus, double. Willing two things. I'm going to do this and I don't want anybody to know it. Contrary and split apart.

Now there is even a closer definition of this in James, chapter 4. Perhaps this is the text that Kierkegaard used when he said "Purity of heart is to will one thing." James, chapter 4, verse 8. Now notice the connection between this verse and psalm 24. They are really remarkable. Beginning in verse 7, (Jas 4:7-8) *Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.* There it is, you couldn't ask for a plainer recap of the split heart, the divided self. Two things are being willed in this heart, there's a double mind and therefore it needs to be purified.

Because purity is to will one thing. What is the division in this man's mind in verse 8? Let's go up to verse 4 and its laid out as plain as day.

(Jas 4:4) 4 You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. So, what's the double mind? Someone that has two allegiances and cannot bring them onto one. "The world, oh there's so much there that I like! I want so much of what the world has to give! God's got eternal life and I don't want to lose that so I want God too!" And you are ripped down the middle like a wife who has a husband, and a boyfriend. That's literally the meaning of verse 4. "Adulterous people" Having a husband in heaven and playing the adulterer on earth. Purity in heart is to will one thing. The truth and glory of God, and not to be divided. Now if you were to go to Jesus' teaching, and ask him if he taught anything like that, did he make it plain? That purity of heart is to will one thing? I think he would say, "this is the first and greatest commandment, that you are to love the lord your God with all your heart." Not 30%, not 80%, not divided, not loving God with 90% and the world with 10%, all your heart, *that* is a pure heart. Purity of heart is to will one thing, the truth and glory of God, the work of God, in everything we do. Isn't that why Paul said "...whether you eat, or whether you drink, do it all to the glory of God." Bring unity into your life.

So that your doctoring and your lawyering, and your nursing and your carpentry, and your house work, have unity. One thing is being willed in this life. God. No boyfriend, no girlfriend, competing with our heavenly husband.

There are other scriptures, in fact we just finished our last series in 1 Tim 1:5 that told us “the aim of our charge is love, issuing from a good conscience, a pure heart, and faith unfeigned.” See the connection again? Unfeigned, undivided. A pure heart is a heart that doesn’t have a split faith. A hypocritical faith, sometimes going out to God on Sunday, then trusting in money all week long. Purity of heart is to will one thing, Gods truth, Gods value, the aim of the pure heart is to align itself with God.

The Greek word used here for pure is (kath-ar-os') ***katharos***, and it has a variety of usages, all of which have something to add to the meaning of this beatitude for the blessedness of the Christian life. Originally it simply meant clean, and could, for instance be used of soiled clothes which have been washed clean. It is regularly used for corn which has been winnowed or sifted and cleansed of all chaff. In the same way, it is used of an army which has been purged of all discontented, cowardly, unwilling and inefficient soldiers, and which is a force composed of first-class fighting men.

It very commonly appears in company with another Greek adjective – Akeratos. Akeratos can be used of milk or wine which is unadulterated with water, or of metal which has in it no tinge of alloy.

So, the basic meaning of pure, (kath-ar-os') **katharos**, is *unmixed, unadulterated, unalloyed*. That's why this beatitude is so demanding a beatitude. It could be translated:

BLESSED IS THE PERSON WHO'S MOTIVES ARE ALWAYS ENTIRELY
UNMIXED, FOR THAT PERSON, SHALL SEE GOD

It's very seldom that we do even our finest actions from absolutely unmixed motives. If we give generously and liberally to some good cause, it may well be that there lingers in the depths of our hearts some contentment in basking in the sunshine of our own self-approval, some pleasure in the praise and thanks and credit which we will receive. If we do some fine thing, which demands from us some sacrifice, it may well be that we are not altogether free from the feeling that men will see something heroic in us and that we may regard ourselves as martyrs.

This beatitude demands from us the most exacting self-examination. Is our *service* given from *selfless motives*, or from motives of *self-display*? Is the work we do in Church done for Christ, or for our own prestige? Is our Church attendance an attempt to meet God, or a fulfilling of a habitual and conventional respectability?

Are even our prayers and our Bible reading engaged upon with the sincere desire to company with God, or because it gives us a pleasant feeling of superiority to do these things? Is our religion a thing in which we are conscious of nothing so much as the need of God within our hearts, or a thing in which we have comfortable thoughts of our own piety? To examine our own motives, is a *daunting* and a *shaming* thing, because there are few things in this world that even the best of us do, with completely unmixed motives.

Our *socially sensitive consciences* must be able to freely, energetically, and zealously, embrace the God centeredness of this beatitude. In *all* of its apparent *irrelevance*, according to the worlds standards is concerned. My own conviction, is that the fundamental problem in our 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 bombarded by human tragedies of poverty, and crime, and abuse, and neglect, and war, and injustices of man to man. We are tempted to agree with the world when they say it is useless pie in the sky, bye and bye to give a hoot whether anybody see's God. Who cares whether anybody see's God or not when the world is falling apart. Just fix it! We are tempted to agree. That is the greatest tragedy of all!

That in attempting to solve the misery of human problems we start thinking it doesn't matter whether the longing of the human soul ever see's God! Just get to work on the problem!

But Jesus comes to us this morning, and he says "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God." Blessed is the pure of heart NOT first because they will change society. But first, foremost, central, because they will see God. For which they were made, for which they were destined, and without which, nothing in life has meaning. Seeing God is the great goal of being pure. Abandon *that goal*, no matter what your goal, or how noble, abandon *that goal* and human culture collapses in ruin. It's just around the corner.

So, now let's ask this morning, what is it to see God? Then, how are these two things bound together? Being pure in heart, and Seeing God. What binds them?

What is it to see God? What does Jesus promise here when he says if you are pure in heart, you will **see God**? There are at least three things included in seeing God as I understand it. First, seeing God means being admitted into in his presence.

At the end of the *ninth plague* in exodus; pharaoh is so enraged, he says to Moses, "get away from me, take heed to yourself, never see my face again! For in the day that you see my face you shall die!"

Moses said, "as you say. I will not see your face again." What does the king mean when he says, "you'll never see my face again"? He means, I will never grant you another hearing. You'll never come into my court again. You'll never have admittance to my presence again. It's the same as today when we get on the phone and are feeling sick, we call a doctor. "hello, can I see the Doctor today?" You don't mean, can I see a photograph. You don't mean can I see him on T.V. You don't mean can I see him from a distance. You mean can I get in there with him and can I let him take my temperature and let him work on me! Can I have an admittance to him? Can we get together? So that's the first thing Jesus means, you will see God, he will grant you an admittance into the kingdom and you will have an appointment with him and he will be with you.

The second thing seeing God means is that you will be awe struck by his glory, by a *direct experience* of his *holiness*. You remember Job, the end of the story, all of his friends are through talking, Eliphaz is through talking, Elihu is through talking, Bildad, and Zophar is finished, then God talks, out of the thunder storm to Job. Then when God is through talking directly with him, Job falls on his face and says, (Job 42:5-6) 5 My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. 6 Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes." He is awe struck!

Virtually all of our spiritual sight in this age is mediated, isn't it? We often say, "I pray, Lord help the people to see Christ this morning." What do I mean? I mean, mediated by the word, and mediated by the providential work of God in his people. We see him today mediated. Not, immediate. But there will come a day, as the promise in scripture has it, when God will reveal himself to his people, immediately. His glory will no longer be inferred from lightnings, and mountains, and thunder storms, and high hills, and crashing thunder. Rather, his glory, according to Revelation, will be the light in which we walk, it will just envelope us in an immediate experience of glory and holiness. That's the second thing Jesus means when he says you will see God. There will be an immediate experience of the glory of his holiness, and we will be awe struck, like Job.

The third thing that seeing God means, is that we will be comforted by his grace. Here is where the connection of *seeing God* and the *comfort of his grace* comes from; again and again and again the psalmists pray like this, "Hide not thy face from me, hear me in the day of my distress." What do they mean? "Hide not thy face from me, hear me..." For example Psalm 27 says, *Ps 27:7-9* 7 Hear, O Lord, when I cry with my voice, And be gracious to me and answer me. 8 When You said, "Seek My face," my heart said to You, "Your face, O Lord, I shall seek."

9 Do not hide Your face from me, Do not turn Your servant away in anger; You have been my help; Do not abandon me nor forsake me, O God of my salvation! See the connection with grace and not hiding “...be gracious to me, and hide not thy face from me...”

Where the implication is, if he doesn't hide his face, he reveals his face, he lets me see his face, he makes his face to shine upon me. Therefor seeing the Lords face, is an experience of grace, and reward, and reception, and healing, and comfort, and consolation.

So that in the end of the age, Jesus says blessed are the pure in heart for they shall be admitted to his presence. They shall be awe struck, by a direct experience of his holiness and glory, and it will all be an experience of grace, and comfort, and warmth, in the bright shining of a smiling face. Not the hidden face of a distant God. I'm sure there's more to it, but at least those three things I believe are the promise, “...they shall see God.”

That leaves us with one last observation, what's the connection between these two? A pure heart that wills one thing, and beholding or seeing God? Jesus gives one answer, its only part of the answer. Namely, purity of heart is a prerequisite of seeing God. Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God. The more impure, the less you see. No purity, no sight. Impure people are not admitted to God's presence.

Impure people aren't stunned and awestruck at his glory, and do not receive the shining of his face as an act of grace. Impure people stand under the judgement of God.

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.** Can you paraphrase that? Blessed are the holy in heart for they shall see God. It means the same thing. Which leaves us all crying out, "who then can be saved?" The disciples then ask Jesus "who then can be saved?" Because there's not a pure person in this world, from one stand point. Nobody went through this past week without sinning. Jesus's answer comes back, **"with men it is impossible, but with God all things are possible."** We close where we began, there are three steps to purity, and I invite you to take them as we close, again, One, a cry to God, for his sovereign creator work, "create in me a clean heart, O God." You can pray that this morning, even if you committed adultery this last week like David did, or murder. "Create in me a clean heart O God!" And secondly, look away from yourself to the one who purchased a purity that we could have never achieved on our own, Tit 2:14 **Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.** Thirdly, trust him, because it says in Act 15:9 **He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith.** By faith, faith is the instrument of the sovereign God by which he weens you away from you

allegiance to the world. By which he brings unity into your heart, and makes you pure. I invite you, I challenge you, I urge you, engage in those three acts; a prayer for the created work of God, a looking away to the savior, and an embracing by faith. Of what he did, without, and what he will do within.

(Closing prayer)

- Lord God, we want to be pure, we long to be pure, because we want to see you.
- We want our eyes to be unclouded, they are so easily distracted by the business of the world, even in its innocence, not to mention the sinful distractions we battle with day by day.
- O God, create I pray, a clean heart in this your people, for we will give you glory, as the one who can make our hearts pure within.
- And Grant us a sight of yourself.