

## Happy are the Holy

*Matthew 5:8*

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In one of his books, pastor and author Kent Hughes records a news report that told the story of Anna Mae Pennica. Anna was 62 years old and had been blind from birth.

At age forty-seven, she met a partially blind man in a Braille class. They fell in love and got married. He did the seeing for both of them as they established their home together. Still, Anna Mae had never seen the green of spring or the blue of a summer sky.

With advancements in the medical field of ophthalmology, her doctor told her that surgery might be able to remove a congenital cataract from the retina of her left eye. Surgery was performed and for the first time in her life, Anna was able to see.

Anna Mae told a reporter that everything was bigger and brighter and more beautiful than she could have ever imagined. She said that she literally could not wait to wake up in the

morning, splash water on her face, put on her glasses, and enjoy the colors of the morning sunrise.<sup>1</sup>

Imagine the happy thrill of being able to see?



**Describe a time when you saw something that was far more amazing than you imagined it would be.**

That's exactly the kind of joy Jesus is describing in Matthew 5, as he describes what it means to experience supreme happiness and joy.

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

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<sup>1</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Crossway Books, 2001), p. 53

The Lord is acting as the Great Physician, performing a physical examination. Nobody wants to go through that, but the Lord knows we need it.

In this verse, he delivers nothing less than a remedy for spiritual blindness. It's going to require surgery – but it won't be on our eyes, it'll be on our hearts. And here's the prognosis – with successful surgery, the Lord promises us spiritual sight.

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

## Happy are the Holy

In order to understand what the Lord is promising, let's consider some other passages. As we do, we'll discover the fact that there are two kinds of purity for the believer: Positional purity and practical purity.

Positional purity takes place when you become a Christian. Practical purity takes place when you act like one.

### **Positional Purity**

Positional purity is when you come to Jesus Christ and recognize you need a Savior. You're a sinner and you need His forgiveness, not just because you've committed some sins, but because you are – through and through – a sinner. There aren't a lot of people on the planet willing to admit that. And

because of that, they don't think they need a Savior after all.

Perhaps you've been realizing that you're not right with God. Maybe the Lord's been dealing with your heart – that open heart surgery I mentioned earlier. You realize you need to be saved. You need God's grace and mercy. You're willing to come to the cross of Christ – and admit that Jesus didn't just die on a cross – He died on that cross for you.

Maybe God has opened your eyes to your need for forgiveness, but you're trying to do good things to make Him happy or make yourself feel better.

Here's what you need to do. Bow your head right now and say, "Lord Jesus, I admit right now that You died for me – for my sin. My sin put You on that cross. I'm asking You to save me right now. Forgive me, not just for a few sins I've done, but forgive me for being a sinner. I claim your death on the cross and the shedding of your blood on my sinful account. I don't deserve Your gift of salvation. I don't deserve Your forgiveness, but I'm asking You to give me these gifts of grace, forgiveness and salvation. I want to become a Christian in the biblical sense of the word; not just some good person, but a redeemed sinner; someone who has become alive spiritually and freed from the penalty of sin. Thank you Lord for hearing my

prayer and for saving me and making me a member of the family of God.”



If this is the prayer of your heart, or if you want more information about the gospel, call us at 919-233-9100.

Let me tell you what just happened. The Bible says,

*The wages – the payment – for sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life (Romans 6:23).*

You just received the free gift of salvation. The Bible also says

*Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved (Romans 10:13).*

You just called on Him – and He just saved you.

And the Bible also tells us that you received the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 3:22).

In other words, you’ve just been given a position of purity. God will no longer see you as a sinner, but as a saved believer.

That’s positional purity – a gift from God. That position never changes in your life, forever.

Positional purity is another term for justification. We are justified at salvation. God legally wipes the books clean of all our offenses.

All your record of crimes and sins were nailed to the cross (Colossians 2:14). And you are declared pure by the work of God through Christ on our behalf.

In a sense, positional purity is the easy part for you because God handled all the responsibility.



Do you struggle believing that you have positional purity? Why might it be difficult for some Christians to believe that your sins are wiped clean simply as an act of God with no human effort?

### **Practical Purity**

Practical purity has to do with us. This is where we take responsibility.

Think of it this way:

Positional purity has to do with belonging to God, and that’s settled forever.

Practical purity has to do with obeying God, and that has to be settled every day.

In this beatitude, there's a promise for the future – we're going to see God one day in Heaven.

But there's also a promise that brings happiness even now, and it belongs to the believer who pursues a pure lifestyle, daily confession and walking after God.

By the way, when the Bible talks about the heart, the Greek word is *cardia* which has given us words like cardio, exercise and cardiology. Those listening to Jesus understood the heart as the center of personhood. The mind, motives, emotions and will are all wrapped up together in the heart. The heart is who you are.<sup>2</sup>

Solomon said the same thing:

*“As a man thinks in his heart, so is he.” Proverbs 23:7*

In other words, that's who he is.

Jesus Christ said,

*Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. Matthew 12:34*

The path to happiness travels through the heart – and the heart will be happy

when holiness or purity determines the motives and the thoughts and the emotions and the decisions.



As someone who desires to honor God, what are things you do in your daily routine to remind you to pursue holiness? If that isn't something you do daily, how can you make that a habit?

Jesus is teaching us, “Happy are those who diligently and passionately desire purity in their hearts.”

The word the Lord uses here in Matthew 5:8 for purity refers to something that is genuine or unmixed. Wheat unmixed with chaff was called pure. Gold without dross was pure. Milk that wasn't mixed with water was pure. So it came to refer to integrity, or honesty.<sup>3</sup>

I was driving down the street the other day and I could see a row of houses that had been built just over a year ago. All the homes were built with wooden slats for siding and they'd been painted beautiful colors. I noticed the color on one of them had sections where it was fading out. The painter had cut corners and thinned down his paint. At first it looked as good as all the other houses,

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<sup>2</sup> James Montgomery Boice, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Baker Books, 1972), p. 46

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<sup>3</sup> Warren Wiersbe, *Live Like a King* (Moody Press, 1976), p. 113

but eventually the truth was out in broad daylight.

Someone who is dishonest and without integrity is eventually going to have it show up in his decisions and his desires, on the sides of his house and everywhere else for that matter.

Happy are those who are holy – genuine, real – before God and everyone else.

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

### **The Promise: We Shall See God**

And notice the promise here the Lord gives – they shall see God.

The tense of this verb is a future continuous tense. I know you're thrilled to learn that. One author expanded this to mean: the believer who pursues purity will continually be seeing God for themselves.



Before reading further, answer this question: How can we see God?

### **We see the hand of God in creation.**

For example:

*The heavens declare the glory of God and the skies above proclaim His handiwork. Psalm 19:1*

David didn't just look around at creation and get happy; he looked around at creation and saw the hand of God. The handiwork of God. The thunder was God's voice.<sup>4</sup>

### **We see the hand of God in circumstances.**

This reminds me of Joseph in Egypt, after his brothers came to buy grain. They had sold him into cruel slavery and he had languished in prison. But when they showed up years later in need of food, instead of demanding an apology, instead of getting revenge, Joseph demonstrated grace and mercy.

And he later said this to them:

*You meant it for evil against me, but God meant it for good. Genesis 50:20*

We might be able to figure it out and explain what God has in mind, but as A.T. Pierson used to say, History is His story.

Even the horrifying crucifixion of Jesus Christ was determined by God before the beginning of time.

Even in the chaos of history, God is in control of the chaos, fulfilling His

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<sup>4</sup> Wiersbe, p. 119

purposes. God is taking this nation and this planet to His determined destination and we will arrive right on time.



Describe a time where you saw God's work in your circumstances that benefited you. What about a time where, in the moment, you thought something bad happened to you, and then later you saw how God worked it for your good?

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, used to say that he read the newspaper to see what God was doing in His world.

God is at work – and the pure in heart have the correct vision to see it.

Warren Wiersbe said it this way, “Spiritual sight leads to spiritual insight.”<sup>5</sup>

The best way to see the hand of God at work in your own life, in the lives of others, and in the life of your world is a heart that you continually ask God to cleanse, like David who prayed,

*Create in me a pure/clean heart, O God . . . renew a right spirit within me.  
Psalm 51:10*

Keep on renewing within me a right spirit – because it’s so easy to get the wrong spirit. Keep purifying and cleansing my heart – not so that I can become a Christian, but so that I can live like one and see Your hand of God.

That’s another way of saying, “Lord I want to see You at work in every possible way!”



Do you desire to see God work in every aspect of your life? If you do, how does that affect your decision-making, goals and priorities?

Helen Keller was once asked by someone who wasn’t very tactful, “Helen, isn’t it terrible to be blind?” She responded just as bluntly, “It’s better to be blind and see with your heart, than to have two good eyes and see nothing.”<sup>6</sup>

Blessed are those who can see with their heart . . . and those with pure hearts see the most of what God is

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<sup>5</sup> Warren Wiersbe, *Live Like a King* (Moody Press, 1976), p. 122

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<sup>6</sup> Hughes, p. 56

doing in creation and in the circumstances of life.

## Your Turn



You're all familiar with the Hubble space telescope, which was launched 30 years ago. You've probably seen some of the amazing photographs taken by this space telescope.



The Hubble telescope orbits the earth 360 miles up – racing around our globe once every 97 minutes. It can peer into space, if you can imagine it – 7 billion light years away.

But before the telescope orbited the earth, taking pictures to amaze us, there was quite a bit of trouble early on. In fact, NASA had to delay the launching of Hubble for 7 years..

In the meantime, the lens had been manufactured, but now it needed to be protected while everything else was completed and these delays were dealt with.

Finally, a place was found where the lens could be stored – a perfectly sterile, clean cell in the Lockheed facility in Sunnyvale California. And the cost for the temporary storage of the lens was 8 million dollars a month.

You thought you paid a lot for rent.

I found it fascinating that scientists understood the best way to see the heavens is through a clean lens.

The Lord is informing us here in this beatitude that the best way to see God and His handiwork, is through the lens of a clean heart.

*What steps can you take today to ensure that your heart is ready to see God and his handiwork?*

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