

Matthew 5:8 The 'Be' Attitudes "Blessed Are the Pure in Heart"

10.11.15

Psalm 100:5

For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to Matthew, chapter 5, verse 8.

Today we return to our study of the "Be-Attitudes" and this morning we're going to be looking at the "Pure in Heart." As you know, these attitudes are being described by Jesus to a group of people who have been taught all their lives that it's what's on the outside that's important. The synagogue rulers, Scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees, majored on the outside and not the inside. Jesus flips that thinking and teaching on its ear. **Look at verse 8.**

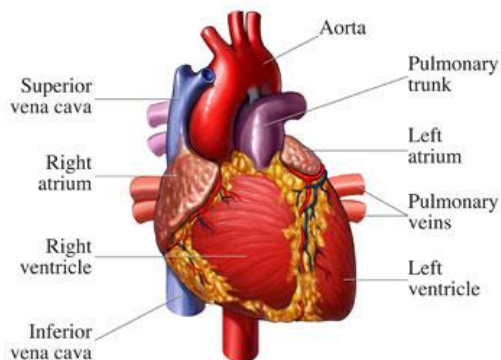
Matthew 5:8

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

As we've talked about with every single one of these Be-Attitudes, Jesus goes straight to the heart! And that's exactly where we are this morning: THE HEART. Blessed are the pure in HEART, for they shall see God.

Now in order to understand what Jesus is teaching here, we need to understand what the word: pure and heart mean. And I actually want to go backwards and start with the Greek word for "heart," which is "KARDIA" and it's where we get our word "cardiac." If someone has a heart attack, we say they are in "cardiac arrest."

What does the word heart mean in the context of what Jesus is saying? What is the heart? Is he talking about this?



No. We're not talking about the organ of the heart. Jesus is talking about much, much more. In fact the word that Jesus uses hearkens back to the Old Testament. It's in the OT you will find that when the word heart was used it was speaking of the "seat of a person's personality" or their "inner man."

Believe it or not, the term "heart" in the OT was often described as the "bowels" of a person. And no, it's not talking about a person's intestines. But, a Jewish person would express his feelings as in terms of what he felt in his stomach or his gut.

For a Jew, when they really felt strongly about something, they would say that they could feel it in their bowels. And that's even true for us today...and here's why I say that. If you feel something deeply in your "heart" then you're going to feel it in your bowels or your stomach. For instance when we're nervous about something...say a test or ball game or before you go out to preach, we might say, "I've got butterflies in my stomach." In other words, you are nervous in your mind and in your gut...the way you feel.

The heart is the entire being. It's the essence of a person's thinking and emotions. Let me give you a few quick examples from Scripture to illustrate this in how the word "heart" is used:

Psalm 119:11

I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.

Matthew 6:21

21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

James 4:8

8 Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

So, what Jesus is describing here is that the "heart" describes a person's affections, thinking, emotions, their will, their desires...the very essence of who they are...the totality of that person's being. And Jesus would go on to say in Matthew 15:8...

Matthew 15:8

"This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me;

You see, Jesus knew that it's what a person does, not what they say that reveals their heart.

And so now we can look at what it means to have a "pure" heart, since we know what the heart is speaking of.

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The Greek word for "pure" is KATHAROS, from which we get our English word "Catharsis," and it means: "to be totally clean, without filth, or stain." We know the English word: Catharsis means: to purify or purge, which leads to renewal. It's often used to speak of what a medicine can do. An antibiotic can cleanse and rid the body of a particular illness such as an infection or disease.

I have a bottle of water here and on the label it says that it's pure.



But, what if I put a pinch of dirt in it. Would you still want to drink it? Of course not! You want PURE water don't you? And that's the point of what Jesus was teaching. To see God, you must be pure in heart. No impurity. Why? Because God is totally and 100% pure. We would call that total purity: Holiness. And because of that absolute purity, nothing impure can be in His presence. This is why Jesus said:

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In your Bulletin we have listed for you what Bible Scholars describe as the four types of purity. We'll put them on the screens as well.

The Four Types of Purity:

1. **Original Purity:** created by God before sin entered the world (*Adam and Eve, Garden b/4 Fall*)
 2. **Positional Purity:** granted to followers of Christ upon salvation (*Upon salvation: imputed purity.*
In other words, when you put your faith in Jesus Christ and God looks at you, He sees you pure.)
 3. **Practical Purity:** day to day responsibility of followers of Christ (*The process of sanctification*)
 4. **Ultimate Purity:** known only in heaven where no sin or evil exists (*At glorification*)
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Now, where we're living today is the hard part. Purity number 3: PRACTICAL PURITY. That's the responsibility that we have day to day to allow Jesus Christ to live out His life through us. We surrender our lives to Him and He literally lives through us in righteousness and purity.

And you see, for Jesus to preach this kind of teaching to that crowd on that hillside was radical. Jesus just stripped them bare of their external ceremonialism. You see...it's not what's on the outside of this bottle that's important...it's what's on the inside.

The Pharisees taught the people ONLY about superficial works and keeping a bunch of rules and regulations. But, that's not what Jesus was talking about. He was going to the HEART...the seat and essence of the person on the inside.

Are you pure?

I know that's a point blank question. But it's a fair question to be asked of anyone who names the name of Christ. You say, "How can I tell?" Well, I'll ask this of you... **What's coming out of your mouth? How do you talk to people?**

Jesus said:

Luke 6:45

45 The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.

What is Jesus saying? Out of the overflow of the mouth speaks the heart...what you really are. So how you do talk?

You can tell if you are pure in heart by what comes out of you. By what is squeezed through your mouth hole. ☺ Just like water must be squeezed out the hole of this bottle of water.

Paul told Titus that we can tell whether a person is a Christian or not a Christian using this test of purity. Watch it...

Titus 1:15-16

15 To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled. **16** They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.

Now here's the problem with this entire concept of purity. We're never going to be totally pure on this side of heaven, right? That's ultimate purity, remember. Therefore for many of us we say, "Well, why even try."

Well, Peter tells the first century Christians who had been scattered to the four winds because of persecution how they should live in 1 Peter 1. And these instructions are for us today as well.

1 Peter 1:13-16

13 Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. **14** As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, **15** but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, **16** since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

But, I know what this creates in your mind and mine: Tension. Why? Because the standard is so high that it looks like Mount Everest to us...we just get psyched out and decide not even to attempt it AND Satan loves it! We become satisfied with DIRTY WATER and no one is going to want to drink our dirty water and come to Christ.

Now, I thought a lot about this. I've thought about this whole idea of examining ourselves to see if we're pure and as I was studying about this, I ran across the words of the famous 18th-century pastor John Newton, who wrote the most famous of all hymns: Amazing Grace. He said this (it's a fairly lengthy quote):

"Christians put too little time and effort into examining themselves and seeking to grow in holiness and in the fruit of the Spirit. But does such close examination mean we are doomed to always feeling inadequate, ashamed, and guilty? No, because this deeper knowledge of our sin will lead us to a richer rejoicing in grace."

People often try to fill their hearts with the danger of what they are doing. They say, 'If I keep doing this, it will cause problems for me.' That may be true and could be good smelling salts to get you to recognize your problem. But if that's all you say to your heart, it effectively only bends the metal of your heart, but doesn't soften it and permanently reshape it.

We need to go deeper into the only lasting way to change our hearts. We must take them to the costly, amazing grace of God found in Christ on the cross. It's there that we can show our hearts the infinite depths to which Christ went so that we could be free from sin and its condemnation. Knowing this through self-examination fills us then with a sense, not just of the danger of sin, but also of its *grievousness*.

Think about how ungrateful your sin is...not just against God's law...but against His heart. Allow this knowledge to melt and reshape your heart with the knowledge of what He's done for you in Christ. Tremble then, before the knowledge of what He is worth—and just how much He loves you. O, what amazing grace!" John Newton, pastor/song writer

And that's why Newton wrote these precious words:

**Amazing grace! How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found;
Was blind, but now I see.**

We serve the Lord with a pure heart out of an attitude of gratitude for all He has done for us.

And that brings us joy and do you know what ultimate purity will look like one day?

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Oh, I love the end of the verse, it's what we're after right? To see God!!! That's what He wants for us...to see Him. And it's written in Greek in the *future continuous tense*. So it could be read this way: **"They shall be continually seeing God for themselves."** You know what happens when your heart is totally purified at your glorification in heaven? You will see God and continually live in the presence of God!

The Apostle John said it this way:

1 John. 3:2

2 Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.

I want to tell you a story now...

When I was about 10 or 11, I don't remember exactly my age... but I decided to go squirrel hunting one evening and it was around this time of year...it was early October the best I can remember. And it was an overcast, cool, cloudy day.

My mom had just picked me and my sister up and our grandma's house and I decided I wanted to go shoot a squirrel before it got dark. Now, I had been told that I wasn't allowed to go hunting in late evening and the truth is...I was a terrible shot with a 22 rifle and that's what I was using. I loaded the tube with 10 shells and I was off.

Well, within just a few minutes, there went a squirrel jumping from limb to limb in the woods behind my house...and I was off...chasing that squirrel as it jumped from pine tree to pine tree...oak tree to maple tree. And little did I know I was going deeper and deeper and deeper into a part of the woods that I had never been.

Eventually the squirrel was gone, but not after I had gone so far and so deep that I looked around and I knew I was totally lost. I absolutely didn't know which direction to go. I started walking in one direction, but because it was so overcast and getting dark, I had no idea which way I was going. So, I decided to go another direction and I walked and I walked, but nothing looked familiar. And then it came...PANIC! It crept into my little heart from all directions. I totally panicked!

So, I did what Daddy had taught me to do. I fired off three quick rounds and began to holler! HELP! HELP! Nothing! I listened and I listened. Nothing. Then I did the stupid thing and I fired off the last six rounds I had and I hollered for all I was worth! I hollered until I was hoarse! Help! Daddy!!! Help!!! Help!!!! And I listened...nothing...absolutely nothing.

By now it was almost dark and it was getting cold. Fear set into me like ice that had talons and in my little boyish mind...I truly believed I was going to die. I sat down at the foot of a huge pine tree and wept and I prayed. I said, "Dear God...please, please help me. I'm so lost and I'm going to die if you don't help me." I scrunched up in a ball by pulling my legs to my chest and I just sat there and cried.

By now it's almost totally dark and with the setting in of the darkness, my hope of being found ebbed away. And then I heard something. I heard the crunching of leaves, behind me and the big tree, but I was too afraid to look. What if it's a bear or mountain lion (ridiculous I know...but, I was 10 for Pete's sake ☺). But, then I heard my name: KEVIN!!!! And it was then a beam of light swept through the woods just past me... I spun around and stood up and there he was... MY DAD! All 6'7" of him. I'll never forget how he was dressed. He worked at Lowe's at the time and they had to wear dress clothes and ties. He had on gray pants, black shoes, a white shirt and striped tie. Well, just like I'm dressed right now.

The first thing I said to my dad was: "Are you going to punish me." He smiled and said son, "What you've just been through is punishment enough. Let's go home!"

You look at me and say, "What does that have to do with: **"Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God."**" I'll tell you. In the story I just told you I was hopelessly lost and all I wanted was to see my Father. Yet, I had no way of making that happen. I could not get to Him, so He came to me.

You see, for some of you here today, God the Father is walking in the woods of your heart right now. Can you hear Him? He's come looking for you and He wants to take you out of the woods of your lostness. He's here and He's not 6'7". No...He's better than that...He's the God of the universe who loves you so much that He sent His own son to die for you so that you could be delivered from your darkness. The light you are seeing today is not from a flashlight this October

day...but, from the Holy Spirit of God who is calling you.

Will you follow God home? He just wants to take you home!

You know what I realized about my story...just this week? My dad never asked me to explain what happened? He never punished me for that stupid. Because I had already punished myself. Like Newton and the song Amazing Grace. God not going to ask you about your past. He's not going to punish you for your past sins. He's willing to cleanse you and forgive it all, if you'll just acknowledge that you need Jesus.

You've been punished enough...Let's go home! Will you call on Him today? Will you surrender your life and confess that you are lost and call on the name of the Jesus? He's here this morning and He's waiting to give you purity. **He's calling your name!!! Can you hear Him?!!** He's here to change your heart from the inside out. So that one day you can see God.

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