

The Pure In Heart

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[0 : 00] So we're just, we're gonna, as I say, we're continuing in our series in Matthew, in Matthew 5, which we've just read.

And as I say, today we're looking at this issue of, the issue of purity, Matthew 5, verse 8, blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Now, I don't know if you've heard of the author H.G. Wells. He was famous for his works of science fiction in the 19th and 20th century.

Perhaps his most famous work was War of the Worlds. There was a pretty bad movie with Tom Cruise made a while back. But one of his, his less unknown works is a short story.

It's a short story called The Country of the Blind. And it tells the story of a mountaineer called Nunes. He goes on a snow climb in the mountains.

[1 : 06] And on his, on his descent, Nunes enters a valley and he stumbles across a really unusual but fascinating community. He notices that, that all the homes in the village, they don't have any windows.

And he quickly discovers that that's because every single one of the villagers is blind. And the book, it's all about his relationship with them.

He tries to explain what it's like to them to be able to see, but it's all in vain. They have no understanding of what site is, to have their site. And in fact, what happens, even though Nunes tries his hardest, what happens is they deny that site ever exists.

And they think that blindness, that blindness is the gift. And there's this famous quote of Nunes where he says, in the country of the blind, the one-eyed man is king.

But in the village, they don't see it that way. And they actually think that site is some form of madness, some form of madness.

[2 : 17] Christianity is about seeing. It's about seeing, physically and spiritually. It's really about being able to see Jesus for who he is, to be able to see God.

And we know, don't we, that the world, the world is just, that it's just like that village. We can attempt to explain who Jesus is until the counts come on, but we know that those who can't see who Jesus is, they think we're delusional, that we're mad and that secular rationality is superior.

That's the real gift. That's the real gift. The beatitude that we're looking at this evening has two aspects. The impure in heart, so our motivations towards living for Jesus.

And then secondly, it's about seeing God, being able to see Jesus Christ. Now, as I've said a few times now, we're in the middle of this series looking at the beatitudes, which opens Jesus' famous sermon in the Mount.

The real thrust, I suppose, on one level, you could say of his whole sermon from chapters five to seven is Jesus is outlining, he's explaining life in the kingdom.

[3 : 39] He could perhaps even say that he's explaining the philosophy of the kingdom of God. What he's not, he's not outlining a checklist of do's and don'ts, but he's setting out, this is life in my kingdom.

This is the beautiful life and it is a life that the living God is beckoning us towards. He's saying, you are the people of God.

You are the blessed ones. So live as who you are. Live as the blessed ones. Live the kingdom life today.

It's a challenge that's held out to all of us, live the life, the kingdom life today because that's the kingdom to which you belong.

This is the kingdom to which you belong. Now throughout the whole sermon, it has a vast of applications of what kingdom living looks like.

[4 : 41] Fundamentally, of course, you could, you could if you wanted to boil it all down to loving God and loving neighbor. But to provide detail on what life looks like, there's nuance, there's detail, there's specifics of what that means, what that means.

And the aspect which comes up in this verse is purity, purity, the pure in heart. Now the pure in heart, that, it does, it is quite an abstract concept, isn't it, to be pure in heart.

And so we have to dig down a little bit and explore what that means. What does it mean to live as the pure in heart? Now purity, I don't know about you, but it's not something I don't think that we talk all that much about day to day.

I don't think it's something that's going to come up as a topic of conversation at work as you're making coffee. I doubt it, as you're eating your lunch, it's not something that we talk about, is it? So the majority of people, I'd probably suggest that one of the rare times, maybe rare times, depends how much money you have, is the word purity comes up in this when you're buying jewelry.

[5 : 53] And especially if people, you know, if they're buying precious stones, diamonds perhaps, jewelers talk a lot about purity, don't they?

They talk about purity because the pure of the diamond, the higher clarity grade it has, it means it's worth so much more. Like I said, I don't know, the last time you were in a jeweler's, it's quite a while for me, but you've probably seen it on films when you see the jewelry, it takes that like tiny, magnifying glass, so it fits in the socket of his eye to inspect a diamond.

When they do that, they're looking for what they refer to in the diamond business as inclusions. It's just a technical word for imperfection because the inclusion, the imperfection, it affects the degree to which the diamond sparkles, affects the degree to which the diamond sparkles.

As the light shines on a diamond, the inclusion, the imperfection, it hinders the way the light is refracted and it lowers the clarity because inclusions, they appear almost like cloudy spots and so the less inclusions, the less imperfections, the greater the diamond sparkles, the greater it shines. The diamond has a higher clarity rate and it's pure, when it's got less of those, it sparkles more and it's worth more money. But I just want us to notice the sparkle, the light that shines out.

[7 : 28] It is dependent on what the diamond is like in the center of the stone. The jeweler doesn't use the magnifying glass to focus on the light that's emitted outwards.

No, he looks right at the center of the stone. The jeweler and the consumer, they're looking at completely different things.

The consumer, they just want it to sparkle, their concern is the light that is emitted or radiated out. The untrained eye is not aware of what really matters, but the jeweler, the jeweler is concerned with what's going on in the center of the stone, how pure it is.

You might even say at the heart of the stone, God is a master jeweler, but the jeweler he's concerned with is your heart.

He cares about what's going on in your center because he knows that your heart is what makes you shine. The nature of your heart will make you truly sparkle.

[8 : 42] And he's always been concerned with that. He's always been concerned with that. The Old Testament saints understood that. The misunderstanding of the law comes when people believed that God cared more about external behavior, cared more about the light that was emitted.

Now of course, of course, the two are interconnected. For out of the outflow of the heart, the mouth speaks.

But the living God knows you can't fake it. That on the outside, you appear to do the right thing, but it's coming from a bad heart. The living God knows that. You think you can buy a fake diamond that to the untrained eye looks like a precious gem, but jeweler's know it's worth nothing that it's not precious to him.

God has always cared more about the heart. Of course, when good works flow from your heart, that's great. That's what he's concerned with.

We see that in the, we see that that's always been the case. The psalmist, Psalm 51 verse 16, you do not delight in sacrifice or I would bring it. You take no pleasure in burnt offerings.

[9 : 53] He's talking about the old levitical sacrificial system, the law, but verse 17, the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart.

Oh God, you will not despise. Jesus, one of the reasons Jesus had a problem with the Pharisees, you read later on in Matthew's Gospel. What is it?

He says, what do you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you are like whitewashed tombs which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness.

They look like they're doing everything right, but he says, inside your heart it's unclean, it's coming from a bad place. They do what the law requires outwardly, but their hearts are far from God.

They're not pure in heart. Now just to clarify, let me just need to pause a minute. What do I mean when the Bible talks about the heart?

[10:51] I had to do my best at explaining this to my six-year-old daughter Heidi when she said, what do you mean that Jesus lives in my heart? And if you were to ask her, Heidi, how many hearts do you have?

She'd say two. She'd say, one is my heart that pumps blood around my body and the other is the heart of my soul where Jesus lives. Now I know you might have questions about the exact theology of what's going on there, but I think we're moving towards some kind of a right answer because what it's saying is it's the control center for everything that we are, our emotions, our reason, motivation, our personality, your heart is you.

Life in the kingdom of God, the beautiful life is to be pure in heart. We long for that, don't we? Do we not long for that?

Where our emotion, reason, motivation is understand by sin? I heard of an older Christian who was asked, what are you most looking forward to about the new creation?

And he replied, I'm looking forward to just doing one thing with pure motivation, just one thing.

[12:12] It's frustrating this side of heaven when even the most godly thing you do still is tainted as mixed motivations. I can't wait for that day to do something totally pure.

And in one sense, as we read this, it should make us long for that glorified kingdom life. Now we're not there yet, we're not there yet, and we all recognize how challenging this is because we know that we're not like that yet.

However, Jesus is not exclusively talking about that consummated glorified life of the new creation. We belong to God's kingdom, we belong to it today, now.

And the challenge, which is opposed to the world's live your best life now, is to live the kingdom life now. It is a challenge because the roots of impurity in our hearts go very deep, they exist in the recesses of our hearts.

We're becoming pure, changing. It's not an easy process, it's a challenge and it can be a painful process. You think the formation of a diamond comes when carbon deposits are put under extreme temperature, it can take days, months, or millions of years and the pure of the diamond comes because it's under more pressure at higher temperature and it takes longer.

[13:42] It means, it means when you're not truly in this life sparkling for Jesus, when the ugliest side of sin, the impurities come out, when you lose your temper, when you pursue comfort instead of Christ, when you can't control your lustful desires.

It means in those moments that you don't just think, oh well, never mind, I'll try better next time. It means we have to be ruthless with our sin, we have to be ruthless with it.

We must ask deeper questions, deeper questions. What's really going on in me? What's really going on in me that makes me do that thing?

What's really going on down here? I just blew off in anger at someone, but what's going on in there that made me do that? Of course we need to repent of the outward sin that comes out, but we need to ask deeper questions of what's going on in our hearts that make us do that.

The deep questions, the nitty gritty, the real change happens in those moments. Sometimes, sometimes, it's not even a question we can answer and we need help with it.

[15:01] We need to ask those questions to the Lord. Lord, I don't know what's going on. I don't know why I just flipped out at that particular issue and say, Lord, what's going on in my heart? And it's probably, it's the majority of the time when you know that that's going on, it's wise to chat it through with a wiser Christian, an elder or a mature believer.

But here's the encouraging thing. He's not left us on our own to deal with it either. The Spirit of God, the Spirit of God is purifying us.

Removing the impure is the inclusions and we can trust Him to work in us. We can't live the life of the kingdom purely now. We can't live as the pure in heart truly.

We can't shine as the people of God without the work of God in our lives. And it's why, actually, in the context of the whole sermon, we have this assurance of what happens when we pray.

Chapter 7 verse 7, we get these wonderful verses about praying to the living God. Ask and it will be given to you. Seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened to you.

[16:14] For everyone who asks receives, he who seeks finds and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. And I think the reason that comes after such a challenging way to live is because God is saying, I know the kingdom for you, on this side of heaven is challenging for forgiven sinners.

So ask me to help you. If you ask for the kingdom life, the beautiful life, if you seek purity, you'll find it. I'll open the door of purity for you.

Purity of heart can be received, found, and I'll open the door if you ask, seek and knock.

So we've thought about the pure of heart, what it means and what it means to live that life, but also we need to address the second aspect of the beatitude, the result.

What is the beautiful kingdom of God life leader? What's the result? And we get this amazing statement. It says that they shall see God, the blessed of the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

[17:24] Now, before we go there, Derek said a few weeks ago that the beatitudes, they come as a unit, that there's not one more important than the other.

It's not like some people have a beatitude characteristic trait, but others lack it. One way that you could say that is every aspect of life in the kingdom is experienced by every follower of Jesus, every Christian.

But I think we especially notice this, I think we especially notice it, the unity of the beatitudes that come in these almost what you could call resultant clauses, because they're all interconnected.

You see they're all benefits of salvation. You see that? God's people are the great beneficiaries from the divine benefactor whose benefits are given without reserve to all the following.

You read them, there's is the kingdom of heaven, they shall be comforted, they inherit the earth, they shall be satisfied, they shall receive mercy, they shall see God, they shall be called sons of God.

[18:30] You can't have one on its own, you receive them all, they're all interconnected, and you see the beauty, the unity of all in these word pictures, images of salvation.

When I say imagery, I don't just mean sort of nice things to think about daydreams, but what I'm talking about is these things are rooted in Bible imagery, Bible metaphor, the pure in heart are blessed because they see God.

We said earlier Christianity is about seeing God, but sight being able to see is deeply connected to knowledge.

What we know, even physical sight, the reason we know color is because we've seen it. You can't explain color to someone, it's a descriptive terminology, you have to see it to know what it is.

You just try explaining green to someone, and it's the same with the living God, you have to see him to know who he is. And the whole Bible talks about being able to see God, it's through the whole Bible, the language of sight, and often the terminology that's used in the Old Testament and in the New Actually is talked about of seeing his face, the face of God.

[19:47] You think there's a few ways that you can know someone, you can hear their voice, you can read their words, or you can see their face. And we're talking about sight.

What does it mean to see God's face? Well, you might remember Moses, Exodus 33, what does living God say to Moses? You cannot see my face, for man shall not see my face and live.

So one of the places when we read about God's face, it's a memorable picture, is that we can't look at it. And then there's this other idea connected, there's other ideas connected with the Lord's face throughout the whole of the Bible, that is of blessing, blessing connected to the Lord's face.

The ironic blessing, number six, the ironic blessing, the Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.

The psalmist in the psalmist that we started off, the Psalm 27, one that we sung, the psalmist he seeks the face of the Lord wants to see the Lord to be in his presence.

[20:58] Then we move to the New Testament in 1 Corinthians 13, for now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, then I shall know fully, you see how sight is connected to knowledge, even as I have been fully known.

And then right at the end, Revelation 22, the throne of God and of 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.

We will behold the face of God and see him as he is. And in one sense, that is the hope of every believer to see God, to stand in his presence and see him face to face.

As forgiven glorified sinners that have been changed in the twinkling of an eye, that is the hope of eternal life that we long for.

But then we think of another passage, 2 Corinthians in another sense, we have seen it. There's two kinds of sight. There's physical sight that we have with the eyes that we've got, but there's spiritual sight.

[22 : 07] It's 2 Corinthians 4, for God who said, let light shine out of darkness, as shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

To see Jesus is to see the living God and to see him is to know him and he gives us eyes to see him. We don't see him physically, but we see him with the eyes of faith.

We see him with the eyes of faith. In Luke 18, Jesus heals a blind beggar. The blind beggar, whilst he can't see him physically, he knows who he is.

He knows who he is. He's seen him with the eyes of faith. He shouts to him, Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me. The crowd rebuke him, but he cries all the more. Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me.

He knows who Jesus is because he's seen him with the eyes of faith. We live with eyes of faith. We don't live by sight, but by faith. Right, it comes again in 2 Corinthians.

[23 : 09] What that means actually, what that actually means is that we can actually read, in one sense, we can read the beatitude backwards. We can read the beatitude backwards.

Because we have seen Jesus with the eyes of faith, because we've seen God, we must be the pure in heart. You see how the logic works? If the pure in heart see God and we've seen the face of Jesus Christ, we must be the pure in heart, and therefore we must be a blessed people.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. There's one last thing I want to touch on. There's one last thing I want to touch on.

How can it be so? We've talked about that. No one shall see God. How can it be so that if it is the pure in heart, if we still recognise him, we often see all our impurities.

How do we piece that together? How can the impure become pure? How can the impure become pure? How can we with our impurities stand before the face of God and live?

[24 : 21] You think when Jesus was giving this sermon, the crowd didn't know what would happen to him within the next three years of his life. The very reason they, and we, can live the life of the kingdom that we can stand before the face of God and live.

The reason, the reason is that the purest heart that ever walked the earth, the Son of God himself, Jesus would become impure.

That though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, so that we through his poverty might become rich, that though he was the purest in heart, yet for our sakes he became impure, so that we through his impurity might be the pure in heart.

As the gospel of Jesus Christ, he took our impurity, all of it, all the inclusions. In exchange he gave us his pure, his pure unpolluted, holy, sin-free righteous life.

So that at Calvary when he died, all our impurities are washed away, and he would rise as the diamond that would sparkle the brightest.

[25 : 41] And in union with him, we shine in the same way. Let's pray. Almighty God, I thank you that we are a blessed people.

I thank you that you've taken us as those who are sinners and totally in need of your grace. And through the gospel, you've taken away our sin, you've taken away our impurity, and you've made us pure.

And I pray for those areas of our hearts where we're impure, where we live impure lives, I pray that you would search our hearts, that we'd know ourselves in a deeper way, and that we'd bring those things to you, and that you would change us by your spirit.

And Lord, we long to see you, we long to know you, we long for our relationship with you to be go deeper daily. And so I pray that you'd give us the desire and delight to look forward to the day when we will see you face to face where we will know you.

And I pray that you'd send us out in the power of the spirit to live and work to your praising glory, we ask.

[27 : 06] In Jesus' name, amen.