

Blessed are the Pure in Heart

Call to Worship: Psalm 86

1st Scripture: Matthew 23:1-36

2nd Scripture: Matthew 5:1-8

Hymn #218- *All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name*

Hymn Insert- *Still My Soul Be Still*

Hymn #574- *Have Thine Own Way, Lord*

Introduction

This morning, we move on to consider the sixth beatitude listed here, in Matthew, Chapter 5: “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” And as we have been doing all along, we will begin by considering the object of the blessing (the first portion of the verse), before considering the actual blessing itself (the second portion of the verse).

I. Blessed are the Pure in Heart

“Blessed are the pure in heart.” To get a clear picture of what our Lord means by this statement, “pure in heart,” let us break it down into two parts, and then bring it back together for the full impact of its meaning.

1) Blessed are the *pure...* What does the word “pure” entail? Well, it would certainly include such concepts as being holy, undefiled, clean, without corruption, unmixed, refined and of a singular state. We would think of a “pure breed” dog, as a dog that is the product of a male and female of the same breed. It is of an unmixed heritage, and tends to be of greater value because of this. Or, we can imagine the process of refining silver, where any impurities (dross) that are in the mixture, are burned out and the silver is wiped clean, which again, increases the value significantly. And so, to be pure, in the ideal sense, is to be without any impurities or defilement whatsoever.

2) Blessed are the *pure in heart.* What then, of the fact that, our Lord adds the clause “in heart,” to this declaration? What does it mean to be pure *in heart*? Well, to grasp this, we turn to consider what our Lord means by the word “heart,” first. What is the heart? Well, He certainly doesn’t mean the physical, beating organ that rests beneath our chest, although the heart “organ” is used symbolically, as a representation of what our Lord means here. The heart then, as our Lord entails here, is the very core and center of our being, especially containing those invisible

parts, which compel and drive the way we think, live, act and speak. Often used interchangeably with the “spirit,” the heart would include the mind, the will and the seat of all emotions. It is the invisible “you” that drives and controls the visible “you.” And especially relevant for what our Lord is saying here, the heart is the lockbox for the motives, which again, work their way out into the way that we think, act, speak and live. The heart contains the “why” for the things that we do in life.

And so, what does our Lord mean then, when He states, “Blessed are those who are pure in heart?” He means, blessed are those who are pure and true and undefiled in their motives. Blessed are those who live and act and speak, under the governorship and direction of sincere and undefiled motives. And the great emphasis of this beatitude, especially in contradistinction to the Pharisees (who looked so good in many of their outward actions), is to challenge the notion that God is pleased, in any way, with outward service that does not proceed out of a true and sincere heart. God looks beneath the actions and considers the inner motives that drive those actions. Indeed, a great portion of the first part of the sermon on the mount addresses this very issue, as our Lord talks about the heart of such evil acts as murder and adultery, teaching that hatred and lust are sins of the same vein. And so, contrary to the teaching of the Pharisees and the religious leaders of the day, who had corrupted the intent of God’s holy Law, our Lord states, “God is concerned about the inward man; his thoughts, intents and motives, even as He is concerned about the outward man; his actions and words.”

Now, one might wonder why our Lord places this beatitude here, in the overall list, if there is some kind of order to these virtues, as we have been seeing? “Being poor in spirit,” would seem to be a good beginning point, would it not? But, I believe that, once again, the pure heart is part of a disposition, which follows poverty of spirit and mourning the effects of sin in the world. Inner conformity to the law, follows the recognition of utter dependence upon God, and understanding the great evil and distaste of the affects of sin. One must be brought out of the Egyptian bondage, first, before they come to Sinai. The motives of the heart can only change and become singularly directed toward pleasing God, following the work of God in providing strength to the poor in spirit, while giving a taste of the glory of Christ who has redeemed us from the evil and wretched sins which we once loved, served and cherished.

And this is the specific catalyst which now drives the redeemed child of God, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, unto the pure motives which would direct and govern a pure life: It is the singular desire to now love, serve and please the God who has freely saved and redeemed us, in and by Christ. The pure in heart strive to obey God with inward sincerity, not to merit His favor, but again, out of love, for the free favor that He has already given and bestowed upon us in Christ. The love of God is the compelling reality which starts the motor of a pure heart; a heart which was given by God, in Christ, through the Holy Spirit, from the outset. Inevitably, all of the blessed parts of the salvation package (regeneration, justification, adoption, conversion, sanctification, anticipation of the coming glorification...etc) compel those who are truly in the kingdom of God, to serve God out of a pure and sincere heart. And it is this inward change, worked by the free grace of Christ, which then leads to, and produces, outward holiness. And it is this inward purity, which beautifies/sanctifies the outward actions, contrary to the hypocritical actions of those whose “seemingly” godly actions were provoked by corrupt, inward motives. That is why our Lord called the Pharisees and Scribes, “hypocrites” and “whitewashed tombs,” who outwardly looked righteous and holy, but inwardly, were full of dead men’s bones.

Before we address then, the blessing that belongs to such as are described here, let me leave you with two examples (one OT and one NT), that can help illustrate all that we have gone over thus far.

1) One of the many OT examples that would illustrate this “pure of heart” concept, is the example of Abraham, particularly when the king of Sodom had come out to him, after Abraham had rescued Lot and the people of Sodom (and Gomorrah) from the nations that had come against them and had taken them (and their goods) captive. The king of Sodom only asked to be given back his people, encouraging Abraham to keep all of the goods and possessions that he had recaptured from the enemy. Such riches would have exponentially increased the material wealth of Abraham, and could easily have tempted him to accept the king’s offer. But, Abraham had a far greater concern for the glory of God, and how such an act might later be viewed by anyone. Lest people should think that Abraham was made wealthy through the generosity of Sodom, and lose sight of the fact that God had given Abraham every ounce of success that he had enjoyed, Abraham refused, in the most fervent sense, to take anything from the king. Indeed, he had

vowed to God, beforehand, that should God grant him the victory, he would take no material advantage from the battle, unto this end. Hear Abraham's response to the king of Sodom, taken from Genesis 14:22-23:

“But Abram said to the king of Sodom, “I have lifted my hand to the LORD, God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth, that I would not take a thread or a sandal strap or anything that is yours, lest you should say, ‘I have made Abram rich.’” Abraham had a singular heart that was committed to glorifying his God. And even when tempted with great wealth, his actions confirmed the pure motives and intention of his heart. [Note: Compare to Achan at Jericho]

2) For a NT example, I would have us consider the Apostle Paul, when he spoke to the elders of Ephesus, for the last time, as he was on his way to suffer at Jerusalem. Having spent a significant amount of time at Ephesus, he could only state the things that he stated in Acts 20, because his outward actions (which they had consistently witnessed) truly affirmed the sincerity and nature of his pure heart. Hear his words from Acts 20:17-38, where we find him utilizing his own testimony, as a means of charging them to walk in the same way [Read Acts 20:17-38]. Indeed, Paul was a man, whose singularity of heart was evident, and the brethren at Ephesus had consistently witnessed this firsthand. [Note: Money/wealth has a way of exposing the heart]

II. For They Shall See God

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” What a profound and wondrous blessing, that is to be granted to the pure in heart! And what does our Lord mean by this blessing? Well brethren, while I cannot answer this question in the fullest sense, what we can be certain of, is this: We will behold the glory of God, and we will bask in the reality of His presence, to the fullest extent, that finite, human beings could possibly, ever enjoy. God is an eternal Spirit. God is not bound by lines. But, in some way, we will grasp the magnitude of His glory, in a way that is unexplainable and incomprehensible in the present. To this end even, the glory of Christ, which was temporarily shrouded by His humanity; His divine glory, which He had expressed to His Father that He desired His people to see, will be seen by us!

I confess, I can hardly grasp a trace of what this entails, in the present. But, I can say this. What I have enjoyed in the few times that I have sensed the real presence of God; the

loveliness of God and the glory of all that He is, which I have come to taste in some limited and fragmented, irregular fashion, throughout the course of my Christian walk, is enough to make me burst, in the excitement of what this must entail! What I have enjoyed, was already most to be coveted! A continuation of those “mountain top” experiences would seem to suffice, if they only but continued unending. But, there is far, far, far more to grasp and behold, and that, without end, in the glory that lies just ahead!

There will be no inkling of a contaminated nature to hinder the vision. There will be no interference or interruption to limit the intake! Our hearts will be full; indeed, overflowing; our minds will be consumed; our emotions will be engaged at full capacity, when we see the glory of God on that day, brethren! Such is the promise for all who are pure in heart! And does it not make sense, to say that the pure in heart, will see the Purest of heart, who has formed us into the image of His own Beloved Son? And when we see Him, brethren, we will see Him, looking upon us, as it were, with the fullness of sincere love and joy and gladness directed toward us. There will be no crease in his brow, as it were. He will look upon us, and we will fully comprehend, that His heart toward us, is as His heart toward His own Son. We will approach His infinite glory with no single sin of our past, attached to our conscience. Every strain of wickedness which would hinder us from standing before Him, will be forever dead at the cross, and buried in Christ’s tomb. “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God!”

III. Conclusion

1) Let me then ask you, what is it that drives all that you do? What is going on, on the inside? That is something that ultimately only you and God know the answer to. But, it is worth examining ourselves periodically, in this regard, as well. And again, none of this is to say that any of us have perfect motives, at any given time. But, if you are a child of God, there ought to be a general desire to serve and please God, in all that you do. Is that general desire infected with imperfection and pride? Sure, but there is also a consistent line of sincerity that drives the Christian life. The Christian truly loves God. The Christian has been born again, with a new heart, producing new ideals, and a direction in life that desires to do the will of God at all times. The Christian is pure in heart. And again, while imperfect, and while he/she never serves Christ

to merit the favor of God (in any respect, ever), he/she, out of sincere love for Christ (having experienced the love of God, personally, in Christ) delights in worshiping and serving God. There is a genuine “motive shift” in every believer’s heart, where we recognize that even any good that we did before conversion, was to promote self and not the glory of God. But now, there ought to be a sincere desire to see God glorified, which actually affects the decisions we make and the words that we speak. Christ is the center of our lives now. We love, worship and adore Him, imperfectly, but truly, nonetheless. And we long to love Him with a perfect heart, in glory, when all that contends with that love now, will be forever removed.

I guess, the question we can ask is this: Do you really/sincerely love Christ? Is there any compelling urge within you, to cast your life into the fire of His glory? Have you really encountered the risen and living Christ? Or is your Christianity simply a conglomerate of religious services that lack any true fervor and desire for Christ? Are you merely a “nominal” Christian; a Christian in name/label only? If you truly love Christ, then be encouraged this morning. Be encouraged to witness the glorious power of God at work in you, which has made you what you could never be, by your own strength! And rejoice, in that, the ultimate desire of your heart will soon be fulfilled! You will see God! [Read 1 Peter 1:3-9]

2) If you are not truly saved this morning; if you are not a Christian, you might be tempted to think, “How can I ever obtain a heart that is pure, and that truly desires to love, obey and serve God?” The answer is, “Only God can work such a work in you.” But, the good news is that God *can* (and is willing to) work such a work in you. But, you need to deal with that, which presently separates you from your God, first. You need to have your sin paid for, and removed. And the good news is, that, that is what the Gospel of Jesus Christ is all about! That’s the very reason, for which, He came! To save, reconcile, redeem and change sinners! [The Gospel!!!]

Amen!!!

Benediction: Jude 1:24-25