

Matthew 5:8 Sermon

One of the greatest blessings and privileges of Scripture, if not *the* greatest, is the idea of seeing God.

Psalms 27:4 **One thing I have desired of the LORD, that will I seek, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in His temple.**

When Jesus told His disciples that He was going away from them, Philip cried out (John 14:8) “**Lord show us the Father, and it is sufficient 足够 for us.**”

And Moses, hearing that God would forgive Israel their sin of worshipping the golden calf, in amazement simply asked (Ex. 33:18) **Please, show me Your glory.**

Certainly the greatest motivation for Christian living and the greatest encouragement to fight the good fight of the faith is the ability to *see* God with the eyes of faith. This is what Moses was praised for in Hebrews 11:27 when the author wrote **by faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king, for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible.**

Seeing God is one of the greatest privileges and also one of the greatest encouragements for living for the Lord. And here, Jesus declares **Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.**

Their greatest possible privilege is given to those who are pure in heart.

We'll focus on this theme under three points:

1. The focus of Christ's teaching (what is purity of heart)
2. The path to attainment 素养 (how to get a pure heart)
3. The blessing purity receives (beholding God)

1. The focus of Christ's teaching (what purity of heart is)

Any acquaintance 学识 with Scripture, any knowledge of the God of the Bible – the Christian God who is the *only* true God, if we know anything of Him then we ought to know this that God wants the *HEART*! There is a particular focus in the Bible upon our heart, and God is satisfied with nothing less.

Seen when God says through Joel (2:13) **Render your heart, and not your garments!** Or when Jesus says in Mt. 15:8 **These people draw near Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me!**

When God speaks to Samuel in choosing the next king of Israel He says (1 Sam 16:7) **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.**

God wants the heart.

But have you ever wonder why? Why is He so concerned about the heart? Why won't He just accept the externals?

Reason is because, as God, He is worthy of *all*. Everything. Not the inside without the outside and certainly not the outside without the inside, but the whole package – everything you are and have and do is to be centered upon the Lord and lived for Him.

And when the Bible speaks of the heart that is what it is talking about.

We may think of the heart more in the realm of emotions. This past Thursday was Valentine's day, and to celebrate it pictures of sentimental 情绪化 hearts are everywhere! And it reflects what we often think of when we speak of the heart – that the heart is the focus of our emotions, but the Bible is far broader when it speaks of the heart.

The Bible tells us the heart is connected to our faith (Romans 10:10 **with the heart you believe and are justified.**)

The Bible speaks about the heart as something which gives understanding. One of the great accusations 罪名 Jesus made against His adversaries 对手 (in Matthew 13) was that they **would not understand with their hearts**, indicating that, somehow, the heart is connected to understanding.

We know the heart has to do with our conscience for when the Jews heard the Gospel on Pentecost Sunday they were **cut to the heart**. (Acts 2) We know the heart can produce good or evil thoughts, because Jesus tells us that **out of the heart come evil thoughts...** and out of the **abundance of the heart the mouth speaks**. (Mt. 12:34)

When the Bible speaks of the heart it is not just speaking of emotion but faith, conscience, understanding, love, and much more! So when God calls for purity of **heart**, He is calling for purity **everywhere**. It is a complete purity – a purity that grips the center of our being, the center of who we are, and flows out from there to everything else in our lives.

It doesn't speak primarily of emotions, but it speaks of our understanding, our will, our desires, and our goals. God wants everything about us to be focused upon Him – all our dreams, all our goals, everything that gives us joy – everything about us is to be centered on Him. That's what God is asking for when He asks for our hearts!

No wonder the Bible speaks of God as a *jealous* God! He is a jealous God in that He not only wants us to *do* what is right, but to actually *like* doing the right, and to like doing the right from the heart, sincerely! He demands that we want to do what is good, that we actually do it, and that it is our greatest joy to do it.

And the idea of purity of heart is exactly this.

Purity is a word that speaks of something as being 'without mixture.' Its a stronger word than the word "good." Pure gold is gold without any other metals combined in it (some women say they are allergic to anything less than pure gold!). Pure maple syrup is just that – 100% maple syrup!

So when God calls for us to have a pure heart He is calling for us to have the center of our being 100% focused upon Him, without mix. It is what the Psalmist asked for in Psalm 86:11 when he prayed that God would **unite his heart to fear God's name** or as other translations read **give me an undivided heart**.

It is reflected again when David cries out in Psalm 19 **keep back Your servant also from presumptuous狂妄的sin. Let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless and innocent of great transgression. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer.**

That is what God is calling for, and that is what God is worthy of. God demands everything that we are because nothing should be competition to God. There is no one as great as our God and so it is only right that nothing pulls us away from that wholehearted devotion to Him. God deserves complete and perfect purity of our hearts because He deserves *all* our praise, *all* our love, and *all* our thanksgiving. God is worthy of all.

2. How is this obtained获得? (How do we get a pure heart)

Writing on purity of heart is both a blessed and a difficult topic to write on. It is blessed in the sense that it resonates very deeply with our soul. This is something we know we need, and this is something we know God is worthy of and so, in speaking of purity of heart, something is *right* about it. It is a blessing.

At the same time however, it is a difficult topic to address because so few of us have it...in point of fact, none of us have it.

If we can trace all through Scripture the idea and blessing of seeing God, and if we can see all through Scripture a desire of the saints to behold the Lord, so we can also see all through Scripture that seeing God is difficult.

When Moses asked to see God's glory the Lord said to Moses **No man can see My face and live.** And when Paul wrote of the sin of the hearts of man in Romans 3 he wrote quoting from Psalm 14 **There is none who seeks after God.**

It is remarkable that some of the most frequent pleas for purity and singleness of heart come from King David, a man known as a man **after God's own heart**, yet one whom it is obvious in Scripture never found his heart to be quite pure enough.

In our own experience I hope we have had our eyes opened to something of the rottenness and deceitfulness of our own hearts before God, for we may yearn for God one minute, and the next we yearn for sin. We have a great time of devotions and prayer only to go to lose our temper in a heartbeat in the home, or go to work and lose our temper, or covet the success of a coworker, or suddenly find ourselves inexplicably 令人费解的 frustrated with the traffic on the road and the thought of God is nowhere *near* us.

James points out our duplicity 表里不一 when he says that with one mouth, one tongue we both praise our God and Father and curse men who are made in the image of God – and beloved these things ought not to be.

Our hearts aren't pure places! How then do we get them pure? How do we get to see God? How do we get the reward? How do we get to know the One who has made us for Himself? The One for who our hearts will be restless until they rest in Him? How do we become whole?

The answer, beloved, is always at the foot of the cross. It is always in Jesus.

We speak sometimes of Jesus as the Great Physician. The Great Healer – the only Healer! Well beloved, He is also the Great Surgeon!

As a congregation we studied recently the **vision of dry bones** that God gave to the prophet Ezekiel in Ezekiel 37. Do you remember it?

It was a vision which God gave to His prophet, and passed on to His people through the prophet, of how God was able to give life to heaps upon heaps of dead, dry, disconnected bones – because God can do what is impossible for man.

The vision itself was explained before it was given. For in Ez. 36:25-28 God told His people of how He **will sprinkle clean water on us, and we shall be clean. He will cleanse us from all our filthiness肮脏 and from all our idols. He will give us a new heart and put a new spirit within us, He will take out the heart of stone from our flesh and give us a heart of flesh. He will put His Spirit within us and cause us to walk in His statutes and we will keep His judgments and do them.**

God does this, by His Holy Spirit, through the work of Jesus. Jesus is more than a great physician, He is a great surgeon 外科医生. And He can take out all that filthiness of soul that we have, all that dirt and muck 粪肥 of the heart which keeps us from loving Him as we should, the impurities that cause us wriggle 扭动 when we hear the idea of purity of heart explained – Christ can take all this and wash it clean. And He not only removes what is impure, but He implants what is pure. He gives us **new hearts**. He makes us **new creations** so that, as Paul writes in 2 Cor. 5, the **old is gone**.

This is the work of Jesus, and this is the power of the blood which He shed on the cross for your sins. When He came to earth as a man He wasn't just here to show us the way or to give us a good example so that we, looking to Him, could strive to be better. He came here to **save sinners, of which I am the worst**. And He achieved what He came to perform.

The only One to ever have purity of heart, purity of all that He was to the very core, gave all that He was on the cross to endure *your* punishment so you could be cleansed. And then, having suffered, He rose victorious from death so not only could your sins be paid for by His sacrifice, but you could grant newness of life in Him.

You see, David's prayer was answered. God *did* unite his heart to fear the Lord. God did give him an undivided heart. It was Christ's! The righteous for the unrighteous, that we might be brought to God through Him.

So how do we achieve or attain purity in heart? First and foremost and of greatest importance we must come to Jesus. He has the purity that we require and He offers it freely to all who will come to Him confessing their sin and looking to Him for the cleansing and newness that He has come to bring.

But there is more. No matter who we are that is where we must start. That is the all important first step and without it we can't get any further. But beloved in the Lord, it most certainly will not stop there.

What we mean is that coming to Christ, repenting of sin, and believing in Him makes you pure in heart in a definitive, 最終 objective way. You are robed in the righteousness of Christ. You are pure because Christ is pure, but the Bible never stops with that truth. Instead the Bible always goes from saying, "You are pure because of Jesus," to say "Now *be who you are.*"

This is illustrated beautifully in Eph. 5:8 **You are light in the Lord, now live as children of light.**

How then do we attain this purity of heart? It starts with faith and repentance and believing in Jesus, but then it continues in a lifelong pursuit where we never stop living *looking unto Jesus* by faith...and repentance. Where that faith and repentance is worked out in our life by God's help so that in our lives, more and more, we become purer and purer before the Lord.

This is a work which God does, and yet it is a work in which you and I are fully involved and which can't be done *apart* from us. As a refiner puts gold into a furnace to burn out its impurities, so God refines us through various trials and blessings that He sends. Yet God also refines us not just by working *around us* but *in us* by His Holy Spirit.

That is what is meant when Paul says **Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is GOD who works in us to will and to do for His good pleasure!** Or when James 4:8 writes, **Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands you sinners, and purify your hearts you double minded.**

There is a dynamic 动力 constantly at work in the Christian life where we are called, actively, to put to death the impurities of our life – to put off the sin that hinders 阻碍 and entangles 缠结. And when we do this by the help of the Holy Spirit we are given a clearer and purer vision of God! We know Him more, we delight in Him more, we are aware of Him at work in the world around us.

But the reverse is also true! For if we do not seek to live for Him, and if we do not seek to be pure in heart, and if we do not labour to grow in Christ with the strength that GOD provides, then we lose our sight of God! Peter writes in 2 Peter 1 that we become **shortsighted even unto blindness and forget that we have been cleansed from our former sins.**

Such is the power and truth of the beatitude 天國八福氣 or 称「真福八端」是耶穌在巴勒斯坦早期傳福音時的宣道，记载在《马太福音》第5章第3-12节，包含信徒稱之的「山上寶訓」內容當中。

before us. **Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God!** That doesn't just apply to heaven! It applies right now, in this life, that we can follow in the steps of Moses who **endured as seeing Him who is invisible.**

And so we are called to come to Christ, but coming to Christ, we are called to keep coming. Keep casting off the sin that entangles, keep running the race looking unto Jesus, keep striving to make your prayer **May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be pleasing in Your sight O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer.**

Do you still yearn 向往 for purity of heart? Do you turn to Scripture with the prayer of the Psalmist – **I have hidden Your word in my heart that I might not sin against You!** Do you love Christ with all? Beloved, He is worthy of nothing less. Let us throw off the sin that so easily ensnares 诱捕 us and run the race before us looking unto Jesus.

3. The blessing of purity

The blessing God promises to you, as you do this, as you run looking to Jesus, as you trust in Him for your purity and as you labour in Christ to be pure the blessing God promises you is this: **You shall see God.**

The prize that has been the delight of God's people throughout all of history will be ours. David said it was the **one thing** he desired! Philip said if he could just see God it would be **enough for him.** Paul said **I want to know Christ!**

This has been the desire of every godly man or woman throughout the history of the world, and this is the desire of every man and woman in the world around us today. We need to know God, whether we will admit to it or not – we need the Lord.

And Jesus says here – **You will see Him.** In Jesus Christ, through His blood, through His resurrection, and through His Spirit's power working mightily in you **you will see God.**

It is not something that waits entirely for heaven. Already now we press on **as those seeing the invisible God (Heb. 11:27).** Already now He encourages us with His presence, at times unbelievably near as we see Him in the Scriptures, or we behold Him with the eyes of faith as our hearts and mouths exalt Him in praise and worship. Already now we have it in part.

But Paul says to us in 1 Corinthians 13 that whatever we see of God now, we see it but **dimly 朦朧地 as through a mirror. But the day will come when we see face to face. When we know God fully, even as we are fully known.**

Or in the words of John – the time when **we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.**

All through Scripture no one could ever see the face of God and live. But in the new heavens and the new earth Rev. 22:3 says that those in Christ **shall see His face...and they shall reign forever and ever.** Those who call upon the Lord will see God – without a veil, without a mirror, but face to face and yet they shall reign **forever and ever.**

Beloved in the LORD, will you see God? Do you see Him now because you have come to Christ for purity of heart? Do you see Him now because your life is one of continued perseverance and endurance 毅力和耐力 in the things of holiness so that you might *know* your God? You are called to nothing less, and God would have nothing less. He wants your heart, He wants *all* of you, and He has given ALL to obtain it. The One who did not spare His only Son asks us to spare nothing in response. Give Him your heart. Give Him your all and, through the glorious blood of Jesus, **behold your God. Amen.**