

I. INTRO

A. Today, in our study of the Beatitudes, we come to the one that is, by far, the most difficult for any of us to relate to: Matthew 5:8: *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*

1. The Greek word for *pure* means, ‘without alloy,’ or ‘without mixture,’ or ‘without pollutant.’
2. Once we hear that it’s quite easy to throw-up our hands in surrender. It’s not too difficult to convince anyone that, on our BEST day, there is mixed motive in our hearts.

B. The first thing we learn from this beatitude is that **Motive Matters**. Jesus is concerned with our heart. It is not enough to try and clean up our act on the outside.

C. **Here’s the problem:**

1. “*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*” (Jeremiah 17:9)
2. “*All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*” (Romans 3:23)

D. Also, we must say that **Theology Matters too**.

1. Theology Matters in church because what you believe about God changes everything. It affects how we love, work, live, marry, parent, evangelize, purchase, and worship. Let’s watch a video clip to give us perspective on why theology matters... [<https://vimeo.com/8788549>]
2. Theology matters to unchurched people too...
 - a. “Perhaps surprisingly to some readers, doctrine was the major factor in attraction and retention of the formerly unchurched. In a culture that prides itself on its religious pluralism, we found that perhaps millions of Americans are on a quest for objective truth.”¹
 - b. “The formerly unchurched told us they were attracted to strong biblical teaching and to understanding Christian doctrine.”²
3. With this in mind pull out the Cheat Sheet from your program and let’s look at some very basic theological concepts that will help us to understand what the gospel IS and how it gets worked both IN and THROUGH our hearts.
 - a. **Election** - God’s call to awaken a person to faith (Eph 1:4 - *He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world*).
 - b. **Regeneration** - God empowering a response in us (Titus 3:5 – *salvation is not on the basis of deeds*).
 - c. **Conversion = Repentance + Faith**. Simultaneously turn FROM sin and TO Christ for salvation (Mark 1:5).

¹ Thom Rainer, Author and President of LifeWay Christian Resources. *Surprising Insights from the Unchurched and Proven Ways to Reach Them*, Zondervan 2008.

² *Ibid.*

- d. **Justification** – A one-time event that forever changes our legal standing before God declaring us not guilty but righteous because of the finished and complete work of Christ (Roms 5).
- e. **Adoption** – Not only has our legal status changed but God makes us members of His family with all the rights and privileges (Eph 1:5).
- f. **Sanctification** – A progressive work of God, empowered by the Holy Spirit, with our participation, making us more like Christ (1 Cor 6:9,11).

II. BODY

A. Concerning Matthew 5:8 I'd like for us to ask an answer three questions – in the light of some very basic theology.

- 1. What does it mean to be pure in heart?
- 2. How do we become pure in heart?
- 3. What does it mean to see God?

B. What does it mean to be pure in heart?

- 1. In 1847 Søren Kierkegaard, a Danish theologian who focused much of his writing on Christian ethics,³ wrote a book titled: *Purity of Heart Is to Will One Thing*. This becomes the beginning of an **excellent definition** for *pure in heart*.

- 1) I would make one small change: “Purity of heart is to ***desire*** one thing.”
- 2) So, when we say that purity of heart is to ***desire*** one thing – **what are we to *desire*?**
- 3) Consider the words of Paul in Phil 3:8-10 (in the first few verses of the chapter Paul identifies his human pedigree and status) – “*I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of **knowing Christ Jesus my Lord**, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, ⁹ and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, ¹⁰ that I may **know Him** and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.*”

- 2. Here are three quick points regarding a pure, undivided heart:

- a. Purity of heart is to make *knowing Christ Jesus my Lord* the primary goal and focus of our lives.
- b. Purity of heart means no deception, no double-mindedness, no divided allegiance.
- c. Purity of heart is to **desire one thing**, namely, God's truth and God's value in everything we do.

³ He is viewed as a caustic, yet passionate writer critiquing the spiritual condition of the Western world – probing church and Christians for “sluggish faith” and “obese worship” (Eugene Peterson, *Take and Read*, Eerdman’s 1996:10).

3. The aim of the pure heart is to align itself with the truth of God and magnify the **worth** of God. If you want to be *pure in heart*, pursue God with utter single-mindedness. Purity of heart is to *desire* that one thing.
- C. How can we become *pure in heart*? (The short version is that the Beatitudes tell us how to move toward desiring that one thing...)
1. So, the **MACRO view** of purity tells us there is a justifying purity that is accomplished at conversion.
 2. The **MICRO view** is seen as we view the Beatitudes as a sanctification process initiated by Jesus through the establishment of a revolutionary ‘Upside Down Kingdom’ that works the gospel IN us and then THROUGH us.
 - a. It first involves surrender
 - b. To owning-up to our own issues
 - c. To becoming humble learners
 - d. To creating in us a holy hunger for God’s (free gift of) righteousness
 - e. To releasing God’s mercy in us and through us
 - f. To purifying (or, cleansing) of our hearts
 - g. And (next week) causing us to become peacemakers (instead of peace-keepers). And you’ll be happy to know, this will culminate in our becoming persecuted...
- D. **What does it mean to see God?** Three things⁴....
1. To Be Admitted to His Presence
 - a. Going back to our Cheat Sheet we see that, We are admitted to God’s presence by the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross. There is election, regeneration, conversion, adoption, and justification.
 2. To Be Awestruck by His Glory
 - a. After God confronted Job in the whirlwind, Job said, *"I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees thee; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes"* (Job 42:5-6)
 - b. All around us each and every day we *"see"* (or, encounter) images and reflections of God’s glory. We hear echoes and reverberations of His voice. All of these invite us into God’s presence.
 - c. There is coming a day when God Himself will dwell among us. *"And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb"* (Rev 21:23).
 3. To Be Comforted by His Grace
 - a. Finally, seeing God means being comforted by his grace.

⁴ Adapted from John Piper.

- b. *“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”* (Rom 5:8).
- c. Again, to seek understanding in basic Christian theology clearly shows that, because of what Jesus Christ has done, we are comforted by His grace

III. CONCLUSION

A. When Jesus promises the reward of *“seeing God”* there are at least these three things implied:

1. **What does it mean to be pure in heart?** To desire one thing.
2. **How do we become pure in heart?** Cycle through the Beatitudes – while remembering that theology and doctrine matter
3. **What does it mean to see God?**
 - a. We will be admitted to his presence, not just kept in the waiting room
 - b. We will be awestruck with a direct experience of His glory
 - c. We will be helped and comforted by His grace.

B. Communion...

1. 1 Peter 2:21-25: *“For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, ²² WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH; ²³ and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; ²⁴ and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. ²⁵ For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.”*
2. The word *Eucharist* is a Greek word that means ‘thank you.’ A few years ago one of my daughters was in college and while she was there she went through a spiritual transformation and decided she wanted to dedicate her life to God. She decided to get a tattoo of the word *Eucharist* as a way to say ‘thank you’ to God – for everything, the good, the bad, and the ugly...
3. Here’s how I’d like for us to partake...
4. If you’re not a believer I would encourage you to not partake.
5. There are two sacraments given to the church, baptism and the Lord’s Table, but these serve different functions.
 - a. Baptism is a one time event that signifies:
 - 1) Identification with Christ
 - 2) Initiation into the Christian faith, and
 - 3) Entrance into the Christian church.

- b. The Lord's Table, on the other hand, is an ongoing, repeatable event (“as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup do this in remembrance of me”) that signifies:
 - 1) Fellowship with Christ
 - 2) Continuance in the Christian faith
 - 3) Unity with the Church.
- 6. The sequence of Scripture seems to indicate that baptism precedes communion
 - a. So, while baptism is an initial profession of faith, the Lord's Table is an ongoing, continual, and repeated renewal of faith.
 - b. Communion is also something of a pledge of renewed trust in Christ and obedience to Him (which is one reason why Paul warns against eating or drinking unworthily in 1 Corinthians 1:27). But it would be pretense for someone to take communion when they have not even taken the first step of obedience to Jesus in baptism.
 - c. Then there's also the biblical pattern. The sequence is always baptism first, followed by communion.
 - 1) In Acts 2, for example, it is only those who are baptized and added to the church in verse 41 who then participate in the breaking of bread in verse 42.
 - 2) In 1 Corinthians, when Paul talks at length about communion (in chapter 11), the assumption from earlier in the letter (chapter 1) is that he is writing to baptized Christians. There are no examples in Acts or the Epistles of unbaptized people taking communion.