

Blessed Are the Pure in Heart

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[0 : 00] We start out with reading a couple of passages. First one from Deuteronomy 26, 16-19.

It says, This day the Lord your God commands you to do these statutes and rules. You shall therefore be careful to do them with all your heart and with all your soul.

You have declared today that the Lord is your God. And that you will walk in His ways and keep His statutes and His commandments and His rules. And will obey His voice.

And the Lord has declared today that you are a people for His treasured possession. Wow, what a wonderful way to put that. You are a people for His treasured possession.

It carries out that same idea. The Lord delights in those who fear Him. So you are a people for His treasured possession as He has promised you.

[1 : 04] And that you are to keep all His commandments. And that He will set you in praise and in fame and in honor. High above all nations that He has made. And that you shall be a people holy to the Lord your God as He promised.

And then similar ideas conveyed through Peter to the saints scattered abroad in 1 Peter 2.

He says, but you are a chosen generation. So helping them understand too how different they are to Him and in God's sight. He delights in you.

You are His peculiar people. You are a chosen race. A royal priesthood. A holy nation. A people for His own possession.

There we are again. That you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people.

[2 : 03] Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.

Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

Interesting. Old Testament, New Testament passages and how they convey those very similar ideas. In both passages, we see God's plan through the ages to choose and call out unto Himself a people who are His treasured possession.

This is what God has been doing throughout time and history. People in whom He takes delight.

People who love Him above all and out of reverential awe of Him, fear of Him, really have it as their ambition to proclaim in word and in deed what is magnificent about Him and the wonderful counsel that He gives us to know Him, to walk in His ways.

And it's those people that truly know, love, and fear God that really stand out in the world today as different and distinct people.

[3 : 36] Just as He was saying in the Old Testament, you shall be a holy people, very distinct, unique among the majority of people in the world.

They stand out distinct in the world because of what it says in Deuteronomy 26. The Lord is their God. I mean, that's the basis of our distinction.

It's not our commonalities in finances, social standing, none of those things. I mean, even with all those things, we do have a commonality, but it comes through being God's peculiar people, His possession.

And it's out of that reality, that covenant relationship, that we are careful to do God's statutes, His rules, with all our heart, with all our soul, all our being is committed to that.

They're people who really have declared that we will walk in His ways and keep His statutes, His commands and rules. We will obey His voice as it's revealed to us in His Word.

[4 : 47] Well, the people Peter was writing to also stood out as distinct in their cities because they also were peculiar people, set apart unto God.

Certainly, they were feeling the pressure, the persecution, because they were distinct people. They weren't careful. They may have wished otherwise.

Oh, why couldn't I just be a Roman like others and not have to go through all this and be so peculiar and distinct? No, they needed reminders. No, you are a holy nation.

You are a treasured people. You have a high calling. And they were people that God delighted in them, people of His own possession.

And they, even though they had not seen Jesus face to face, they loved Him. They believed in Him and experienced inexpressible joy and glory.

[5 : 45] It's what it says in chapter 1 of 1 Peter. Wow. These aren't people that are having to settle for less in the world. Well, they are people who have far more in the world because they are God's treasured possession.

We as well, here this morning, who are His possession by faith in Jesus Christ. Well, they were living distinctively different lives from the vast majority of other people all around them.

And they were blessed, really, in doing so. And today, those of us who are in this covenant relationship with God by faith in Jesus Christ also have the same privilege and the same privileged experience of living in the blessings of knowing God.

So if you came here this morning, kind of gloom and living in doom, cast those thoughts aside and let's focus on what we have in Christ Jesus.

And we've been learning this from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount recorded in Matthew 5. Of course, we've been focusing on the Beatitudes. And those Beatitudes really celebrate the wondrous life of the one who is a member of the kingdom of Christ.

[7 : 05] He's not teaching what one must do in order to become a member of the kingdom. No, He's addressing His disciples. Those who are His. Those who are members of the kingdom of Christ.

Let me start reading those verses again. Seeing the crowds, He went up on the mountain. And when He sat down, His disciples came to Him. And He opened His mouth.

The phrase, of course, whenever somebody speaks, they open their mouth. It's a phrase conveying what He's about to teach is important information. Important information to take note of.

And so that's why that phrase is there. And He opened His mouth and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

[8 : 09] And this morning, we look at the Beatitude in verse 8. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Well, what we've been learning is what Jesus is teaching is very different to what was believed by the majority of the people in the culture at that time, and obviously today as well.

And this Beatitude also is very distinct from what was accepted as the norm or commonly believed to be true. Very distinctly different.

Jesus is teaching that those who will see God enter the kingdom of God are those who have a pure heart. That was not what was being taught by the religious leaders at the time.

And Pastor John has been helping us understand that false teaching that was being presented by the scribes and the Pharisees. They emphasized a strict obedience to the law of God and other numerous laws that they had made in order for a person to be acceptable to God, in order to see God and enter His kingdom.

While they taught strict obedience, as we've learned, they developed ways to get around the laws and still maintain their right standing before God. Can you imagine the darkness of their thinking demanding strict obedience, strict obedience, but all the time, this is pretty tough.

[9 : 39] You know, let me get around it in this way. How can a person do that and still have a clear conscience that he is right standing before God? That's the darkness of vain thinking and darkened hearts and understanding, thinking, I'm okay, even though I'm going around what I'm saying you've got to do in order to be right with God and go into the kingdom of God.

Well, their message was not one of good news, for no one could realistically keep all the laws that they had established. Instead of finding the way of life and freedom from sin, their teaching became burdensome to the people and the people lost hope in ever really seeing God with any confident hope and expectation because their hope was not in the unfailing love of God.

They were being told, your hope is in observing the law in every one of these laws and keeping them perfectly. They knew they couldn't do that. They knew they weren't doing that.

And Jesus confronted them about their hypocrisy. His words to them didn't become with, Blessed are you Pharisees. Now it became, Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they're full of greed and self-indulgence.

You blind Pharisees, first clean the inside of the cup and the plate that the outside also may be clean. So the law wasn't given to be an avenue through which a person could attain righteousness that would enable him to be acceptable to God and to see God to enter his kingdom.

[11:26] That wasn't the purpose. It was given to show the standard of God, certainly, but one's inability to attain that standard in and of himself apart from God and faith in Jesus Christ.

And the law is very good at that. With each one of us, we know that. Galatians 3.24, Paul was helping the people understand because they were facing the false teaching from some of these Judaizers that were saying, Oh no, you've got to come back.

Come back. Come back to this faulty way, this hopeless way of life. That's not what they were putting, but in reality, that's what it was. So Paul was having the right to them and help them understand, No, no, that's not the way.

Don't go back there. The law was our guardian until Christ came in order that we might be justified by faith. Helping them understand God's way.

So Jesus brings a different message from that of the Pharisees when he says, Blessed are the pure in heart. Jesus moves from just an outer conformity of the law, this outer purity of life, to the necessity of inner purity of heart in order to see God.

[12:50] The righteousness necessary in order to see God must go beyond that of the scribes and Pharisees. That was ineffective. And really purifying the heart and preparing a person to see God.

The divine design of God in order for a person to see Him is to have a pure heart. And that's the blessed condition of His true disciples.

That's the divine design of God for a person to see Him. Initially, this teaching of Jesus might not seem to be hope producing, especially to the person who's still outside of Christ.

The person who is not a member of the kingdom of Christ. The person who's thinking, I can't conform to an outward standard of unrighteousness. Now you're telling me I must have a pure heart in order to see God.

Well, isn't that good to be confronted with that reality? That I can't even keep the outward law. I can't. There's no hope for me in and of myself to have and enter the kingdom of God by purifying my heart.

[14:02] I can't do either one. Yeah, that's the point. That's where a person needs to come to be in understanding of himself. The person who's a disciple of Christ, a member of the kingdom of Christ, oh, that person's rejoicing in his blessed condition because his or her heart has been made pure.

And he has that blessing of seeing God both in the present and in the future. So, the question is, how did these people acquire and achieve such a pure heart?

God's design for acquiring a pure heart. Let's understand what the heart is. When referenced in the scriptures, it refers to all that is immaterial in the inner person, mind, emotions, your will, all that animates the life outwardly.

We see that in Proverbs 4.23. Keep your heart, your inner being with all vigilant, for from it flow the springs of life. All the issues of life that come out from us, words and actions, flow from who we are inwardly.

What is the truth about us inwardly? So, at times, when people, why did you do that? Well, because he or she or this or that. Those may have been influences, but in reality, that's not why you did it.

[15:29] You did it because of what is treasured in your heart. And that's what moved you to respond in that way to that person or those circumstances.

The heart is the inner, immaterial part of us from which all the issues of life flow. So, apart from God, the heart of every individual is described as being deceitful and desperately wicked.

So, the evil words, the actions that are manifested outwardly come because of the sinful condition of the person's heart. Mark 7.21-23.

For from within, I mean, this is something Jesus had to constantly go back to to help people understand. Always looking for some outward reason why I am the way that I am because maybe there's some hope I can change the outer circumstances and actually become acceptable to God or shift the blame onto somebody else or circumstances rather than taking personal accountability for what's come from my life because of what's in my heart.

And so, Jesus is helping them understand for from within, out of the heart of man come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, every slander, pride, foolishness, on and on.

[16:59] You could keep on going. He's included quite a list here. All these evil things come from within and they defile a person. In Ephesians 4, the Apostle Paul was helping these disciples, these saints, understand that same principle.

Now this I say in testifying the Lord. You must no longer walk as the Gentiles do. Then he starts identifying the mind of that Gentile, that unbeliever, that one who is not a disciple of Christ. Helping them understand you are disciples of Christ, followers of Christ, all that you see in the life of an unbeliever that goes contrary to God and His holiness, that no longer has any part in your life as a follower of Jesus Christ.

You must no longer walk as the Gentiles do in the futility of their minds. They're darkened in their understanding. They're alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardness of heart.

They've become callous or insensitive and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. So that's why we see the evil in the world around us because of what's going on in the heart of man.

[18:27] They're darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the hardness of their heart, insensitive to God, have pushed it away, suppressed it in their pursuit of unrighteousness.

So every kind of impurity of thought and action comes from an impure heart, that inner person. And every person that has come into the world except Jesus Christ entered the world with such an impure heart.

and the result is what Paul wrote in Romans 3.23, all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. So what is it that needs the change in the life of a person in order to see God?

It's the impure heart of a person that needs the change to a pure heart in order to see God. Well, again, that's not accomplished by outward acts of righteousness as the scribes and the Pharisees were teaching, but only by the sovereign grace and mercy of God through the work of His Holy Spirit and His powerful gospel message.

Because of that work of God, the individual who is spiritually dead to God is made alive and comes to true repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. Praise God!

[19:49] I mean, what is infusion to? Paul just had to come out and say, by grace you are saved. And we can rejoice in that. God spoke of this in Ezekiel 36.

And I will give you a new heart. See, that's what that kind of individual needs. Everyone that is coming into this world with an impure heart needs a new heart.

That inner transformation. God says, I will give you a new heart and a new spirit I'll put within you and I will remove the heart of stone. Remember Ephesians?

Hardness of heart. I'll remove that heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

And then Paul writes of it in Titus. In Titus 3.5 He saved us not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy. Put their hope in His unfailing love that comes out of that mercy of God.

[20:53] There's that relationship between mercy and the kindness of God is unfailing love by the washing of regeneration and the renewal of the Holy Spirit.

So this person who is now united to Christ is made as Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5.17. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.

The old has passed. Behold, the new has come. So God has transformed the individual at the heart level where the change really truly needs to take place.

And now out of that transformed heart, the individual lives a new life outwardly. The individual lives is distinctively different in his day-to-day life, activities.

Work takes out a new perspective. And it's seen outwardly in the way he submits to his boss or does his work, doesn't work with his eye, thinking that, is the boss looking?

[22 : 04] Now works with the view that to honor God and to please God in so many ways. the individual lives distinctively different in his or her daily life.

His outward life is being transformed now to reflect the reality of what's taking place inwardly. Remember, Jesus taught out of the heart the man lives.

So now with this inner change that's taking place, this person has been given a new heart by God. Now the outward aspects of his life begin more and more to conform to the inward reality of this change that has taken place.

And his life takes on this whole different look of holiness, actually, which is good. He's growing in godliness.

He's progressively becoming transformed into the likeness of Jesus Christ. Out of this new heart that loves God, he wants now to glorify God and to please Him.

[23 : 16] You know, I never had this desire before. I thought people who thought that way lived that way were crazy. But, I'm thinking the same way now.

And my life is changing now in wonderful ways. I trust that we can all give testimony of that.

Pastor John gave the example recently of Onesimus. He ran from Philemon, stole something, ran, tried to get away. Imagine that.

You can't run far enough from God and think that you can get away from God. Thankfully, God providentially brought him in contact with Paul.

Good news of the gospel. God works sovereignly. Onesimus put his hope in the unfailing love of God. Changed inwardly.

[24 : 15] Now changed outwardly. Going back to Philemon as who? Someone who was useful now. It's the way it works. Well, it's that individual that stands in this blessed condition as stated in Matthew 5.

Verse 8. Blessed are the pure in heart. So, what's the blessing that belongs to the pure in heart that he or she enjoys out of this pure heart that God has worked in him?

Well, it says, they will see God. And this is really, truly, the richest blessing of all. it's not only a blessing that he'll have in the future, but also one that we experience now as well.

We see God from an inner being that has been granted new spiritual life so that we see God in ways that we were blind to before.

We enjoy the honor, the blessing of seeing him, having an awareness of his presence, participating in fellowship with him. I mean, see, these blessings that we receive as God's people are not just something far, far away in the distant future.

[25 : 37] This is something now. This is something that affects life now. And so, I'm hoping again in these beatitudes that have been helping me see the riches that are mine now in Christ Jesus, that I'm not living as a second-rate citizen in the world today, that the world is trying to communicate to us that we are, we are the ones that are looked down upon.

As many times in the scriptures it's presented that way. And God's people had to fight that off over and over again, and the only way to do that effectively is have the truth that we take in and we meditate on that and make that our treasured possession, not that which is communicated by the world around us, that does not see God.

We can, and there's riches in that. A quote from John MacArthur, this vision of God commences when the eye of the soul opens, when the spiritual vision begins in the regenerate heart.

Like Moses, we see him who is invisible through the eyes of faith. We tell an unbeliever that. We see him who is invisible. That makes no sense.

It doesn't unless you have a new heart. And I've been experiencing walking with him who is invisible and having him present within.

[27 : 07] Well, we see him in the present, certainly in his creation. Romans in his creation. Romans 1.20. For his invisible attributes, namely his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world and the things that have been made.

You see, the words that he uses, his invisible attributes, clearly perceived, they're there. Psalm 19.1 and 2, the heavens declare the glory of God.

The sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech. Night to night reveals knowledge. All these words using, connecting with the senses, communicating, he is there. And the psalmists were seeing him in that which he had made. And the person who has a new heart experiences that. The individual with a pure heart has the blessing of seeing God, what he's made.

There's a higher enjoyment in creation. When one who has a new spiritual life and knows God sees God's handiwork and what he has made and continually sustains.

[28 : 26] Carol and I experienced that last night. We have something in our household. Carol and I live in the basement. Our daughter Jody and her husband live upstairs.

So, down in the basement, we've got a couple windows and look a certain direction. We don't always see the sunrise or the sunset. And so, somebody will stomp on the floor and yell downstairs, sunrise alert or sunset alert.

And so, that means, okay, we've got to go up and look at the sunrise or sunset. Usually, not the kids saying sunrise alert. But, sunsets, they'll let us know.

And so, we did that last night. I don't know if you saw the sunset last night. But, went out on the back patio and it was beautiful. people, you know, we were there just a couple minutes and looked at each other and said, excuse me, blessed are the pure in heart that they shall be God.

Why is this happening? God. But, that was the connection. We wouldn't have thought that without a pure heart that God had worked in us.

[29 : 40] And we had much more enjoyment out of that when we saw God in the magnificence of how he sustains and what he made.

Just beautiful. What about seeing him in the scriptures? From beginning to end in the scriptures, we see God. We see him displaying his power, love, compassion, justice, wisdom, knowledge.

I mean, on and on we could go. The scriptures are there given to us that we might know him, that we might see him, the truth of who he is and not be confused and enjoy who he is as we begin to know him more and more and see him and the reality of who he is.

And, of course, we see him in Christ. Philip said to him, Lord, show us the Father and it's enough for us. Jesus said to him, have I been with you so long and you still do not know me, Philip?

Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. Of course, we're seeing Christ in the scriptures.

Hebrews 1.3, and he is the radiance of the glory of God, the exact imprint of his nature.

[30 : 53] Colossians 1.15, he is the image of the invisible God. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

We open up the scriptures, read through the gospels, not just the gospels, the Old Testament as well, proclaims Christ, sets him forth for people to see. As we open that word and see Christ, we see God.

we see him in his work of providence, Galatians 45, 19-20, Joseph said to them, after his brothers, they were concerned, revenge now coming on us for the way we treated our brother Joseph.

Joseph said to them, do not fear for am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, and they are today.

Joseph saw, God, Joseph saw the hand of God in all of this, and declaring to his brothers the greater purposes that God was working in his providence.

[32 : 04] Romans 8, 28, and 29, and we know that for all those who love God, all things work together for good. For those who are called according to his purpose, for those whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his son.

So as we look at what's going on in our lives, we're not people without hope and despair. When bad things happen, because in all of these things, we see God working for a higher purpose.

So again, we're not people of despair, we're people of hope. We've still got to work the problems out. Certainly, that doesn't mean I'm not going to do anything about the problems.

but I'm recognizing I'm not at the hands of just the circumstances and people around me who might be seeking to destroy me, working against me.

There's one who's greater than all. The Lord is your God. The Lord is my God. And he's working all these circumstances together for the good of my transformation into the person of Jesus Christ.

[33 : 16] But that's the truth I have to take into my day. That's the truth that must sustain me if I'm going to see God. That's the reality, the invisible that is real that's going on.

And it's that true sustaining truth that takes me through those situations. We also see them in the church. Romans 13, 13, let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh to gratify his desires.

So as we come here on a Sunday or if we see each other during the week, who do I see? well, yeah, I see you and you and you and you. But even bigger than that, I see someone clothed with the person of Jesus Christ.

And so I see Christ and the power and the wonder of God and what he's doing in transforming someone like you or you or you into the likeness of Jesus Christ.

And I'm reminded how wonderful and how glorious is this God who's yet working today in my life and the lives of so many people.

[34 : 48] So here we're here together, all clothed, trust. I know some are not, but clothed in the likeness of Christ, ready to offer up unto God sacrifices acceptable to him.

Well, there's other ways we see God that I don't have included in the notes. I was thinking, oh yeah, this one we could include, this one. The ordinances that we do, baptism, the Lord's Supper, or husband-wife relationships.

You see God there, the husband, love your wife as Christ, love the church, the wife, be that helper, God is the helper, submissive to her husband, see Christ, see God in those relationships as well. Wonderful to discuss this as you have opportunity. Well, you might have opportunity in small groups or whatever. Well, so in the present, we have the blessing, the pure in heart, blessed are they, for they see God in the present, but also in the future.

In reality, there's coming a time when everyone will be confronted with Jesus face to face.

Philippians 2, 9-11, therefore God has highly exalted him, Christ, and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth.

[36 : 15] Every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. But those who have impure hearts, they will be cast out of his presence, never to see him again, and have to pay the wages of their own sins in hell forever.

so it would be woe to the impure of heart, but they will not see God. Don't see him in the present, but eternally unaware, not seeing he who is all glorious, Jesus Christ.

Eternally. I think about that at times. I think eternally. I think of that again, Carol, on the front porch last night, enjoying the front

view. And just sitting there and commented, you know, someday we'll be sitting in a new earth.

It'll be far better than this. It's beyond my comprehension. Well, just as much beyond my comprehension as one with an impure heart. We'll never see God, ever.

[37 : 30] That is a burden. But, blessed are those who have a pure heart. 1 Corinthians 13, 12, for now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face.

1 John 3, 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.

Those with your heart will see God. That again blows my mind, what that will be like. R.C. Sproul says, the greatest glory of heaven is not that we will be free of pain, as wonderful as that will be. Instead, the ability to enjoy direct, face-to-face communion with God and see that for which our souls were created will be the highest joy that we can imagine.

So we end. Blessed are the pure in heart. What will happen? They will see God. Let's pray. Father, that is a wonder to us that we, who have pure hearts by your grace, are beginning to experience now, even in the fallen world.

[39 : 02] You're opening our eyes to the wonders of who you are, the way that you work. We thank you for that awakening within us, but we thank you as well for the hope that we have that your love will never end and that we are secure in Christ Jesus.

Oh, may that be used by your Spirit to move us on forward in the world today and enjoy the riches we have in Christ Jesus. In his name we pray. Amen.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. lots of