



## **The Manifesto of the King, Part 6: Blessed are the Pure in Heart**

*Series: Matthew: The King and His Kingdom*

Matthew 5:1-12 (v. 8)

March 13, 2011

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### Introduction and Recap

We are coming today to one of the most comprehensive, wide ranging and most penetrating, of all of the beatitudes. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." After all, isn't that the hope, the goal, the longing, the objective, the aspiration, the aim of life – to see God, and not just see God but to be accepted and received by God like this beatitude implies? This is what we are living for – that we may live our lives in such a way as to see God.

Remember what we have seen so far in the beatitudes. These beatitudes from Christ create for us a picture of what the true Christian, the true follower of Christ really looks like. These beatitudes are not given to us as commands to follow but are instead presented to us as a description of what a Christian really looks like. So far we have looked at the beatitudes that describe the character of the disciple described in the first three. Then we saw the pursuit of the disciple. Then last week we began to look at the conduct. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. And now this week, we will consider Christ's statement: Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God. Now at first glance, it may seem that this should be included in that first grouping of characteristics of the disciple and not the conduct of the disciple, but what we need to see here is that purity of heart is not a static thing...it leads to the expression of that purity real ways. But the heart is the key and that is what Jesus is making us to see here this morning. Jesus means for us to understand that

### Christianity is a Religion of the Heart

If we are familiar with the Word of God, it is not surprising that these words would come from the Son of God. Throughout Scripture we see God place a very heavy emphasis on the fact that true religion, that true Christianity, is about the heart. God looks upon the heart. Jesus makes much of the heart, of internal purity, in direct contrast to the religious deceivers of His day, the Pharisees, who made much of external and ritual purity.

The Pharisees, as you know, were driven by appearances, by outward rules and regulations, by their specific rules of piety and apparent righteousness, but their hearts remained hard, cold and dead. In fact, Jesus' response to their focus on the external to the exclusion of a pure heart before God is scathing: (Matthew 23:25–28, ESV) Jesus would say of the Pharisees and their preoccupation with pretend holiness: (Matthew 15:7–9, ESV)

So in great contrast to the false godliness of the Pharisees, Jesus tells us that His disciples' purity is deeper and truer than that of the Pharisees. In describing the true disciple Jesus says: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." (Matthew 5:8, ESV) Let 's understand what Jesus is saying by starting with the precept:

### 1) The Precept: Blessed Are the Pure in Heart

What is the Heart? If we are going to understand this beatitude, we need to have a firm understanding of what the heart is. The word "heart" comes from the Greek word, *kardia*, from which we get the word *cardiac*. But this word means far more than the muscle in your chest that pumps blood through your system. In Bible times people thought of the heart as the very center of a person. What you think, how you feel, your motivations, impulses and passions all flow out of your heart—from the very core of your being where everything has its root. It encompasses your mind, your understanding, your emotions, and your will. It is from the heart that everything else flows. Proverbs 4:23 speaks of the importance of our hearts saying: "Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life." (Proverbs 4:23, ESV) In other words, your heart shapes your life. If that's the case we are in trouble and here is why.

The description of the fallen human heart is shocking. In the book of Jeremiah, God says of it: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?" (Jeremiah 17:9, ESV) Jesus said of the heart of fallen man: "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a person." (Matthew 15:19–20a, ESV) Paul described man with a fallen heart like this: "They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart." (Ephesians 4:18, ESV)

This is the condition of the fallen human heart and that poses a great problem. There is no way that we can make our own hearts pure – nothing works -- not ethics, not self-made religion, not

moralism, not asceticism, nothing – none of them have power to change the heart -- and Jesus says that His disciples are pure in heart. That is a massive dilemma. Our hearts are, by nature, wicked and rebellious, dead and cold, filled with sin and desperately sick but the disciples of Christ have pure hearts. What do we do? We cannot fix our own hearts, but thank God, what is impossible with men is possible with God. How does a disciple get a pure heart? Only by the grace of God. The brilliant truth is this. The work of making the human heart pure is a work of the Living God. Only God can purify the heart. How does he do it and what does a pure heart look like?

### Two Kinds of Purity

When we talk about purity of heart, we need to understand that we are talking about two sides of one coin. Purity of heart has two distinct but related senses in Scripture. The word pure – *katharos* – can mean first, to make pure by cleansing from dirt, filth, or contamination. So to be pure in heart, first of all, means to be cleansed of our sins. If we are going to have clean hearts before God, if we are going to be pure in heart before Him, as His disciples, God must wash us of our defilement and He does. The OT prophets looked with anticipation to the day that God would give to his people clean, hearts, pure hearts. Ezekiel recorded: (Ezekiel 36:25–27, ESV) As well, the prophet Jeremiah wrote: (Jeremiah 31:33, ESV) When Jesus says that his disciples are pure in heart, He means first that they have been cleansed. That cleansing takes place at salvation, when God makes us to be born from above, when he grants us the grace to repent of our sins and to turn to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and are washed by His blood and cleansed of our defilement and sin. A pure heart is a gift from God, and it comes by way of the new birth, by the new creation of God, by the washing of regeneration and through the cleansing of His blood. We see this truth expressed in many ways: (2 Corinthians 5:17, Romans 5:9; 1 Corinthians 6:9–11, ESV)

And again, a text that we looked at last week, but we will read a little bit further: (Titus 3:3–8, ESV) Did you see that? The new heart, the cleansed heart, the pure heart of a believer, is the gift of God by His grace, but then purity of heart is to lead to purity of practice. We are given a new heart, a cleaned heart, a purified heart and by God's sustaining and empowering grace and by the strength of His Spirit working in us, we cultivate practical purity in our hearts and lives.

You can see where this is going. First of all, what we need if we will be the disciples of Christ, is positional purity. God is the one who does that. That's salvation. But true salvation shows itself in true sanctification or practical purity and other side of the coin when we talk about being pure in heart.

This phrase “pure in heart” not only refers to the work of God’s grace to wash and cleanse us of our defilement and sin, it also refers to single-hearted devotion, to a sincere heart toward God, a heart of integrity toward God that manifests itself in the way that we live. The Greek word for pure was also used to describe clear water without contaminants, to describe metals without impurity, to describe grain that had been winnowed and separated from the chaff. The idea of a pure heart, in practice, is a heart that is unmixed in its devotion to God. When Jesus speaks of the pure in heart He is talking about a heart that is of pure motive – single-mindedness, undivided devotion, spiritual integrity, and true righteousness.

James refers to this idea when he writes: “Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.” (James 4:8, ESV) James is describing a person with a divided heart, someone who tries to look in two directions at the same time. One minute we are serving God and the next we are serving our own interests. One minute pursuing Christ and the next pursuing the things of the world. This kind of living will only succeed in pulling our life apart. If we aim purely and only at the glory of God, seeking His honor, and directing everything we do and say by His Word, then we will have a single heart. If instead we live to please other people, we live to fit in with the world, for the applause of men, if while we profess to honor God we are really looking for ways to honor ourselves, and seek our own desires under the appearance of seeking after God, we have divided hearts. DA Carson talks of the ease with which our hearts can become divided: “We human beings are a strange lot. We hear high moral instructions and glimpse just a little the genuine beauty of holiness, and then prostitute that vision by dreaming about the way others would hold us in high esteem if we were like that. The demand for genuine perfection loses itself in the lesser goal of external piety; the goal of pleasing the Father is traded for its pygmy cousin, the goal of pleasing men. We cannot live a divided life. A double minded man is unstable in all of his ways.

The pure in heart is simply a person whose great overarching ruling passion in life is to belong to God, to love God, to know God, to obey God, to serve God, to trust God, and to glorify God and it shows in his living. Like the psalmist, his prayer is: “Teach me your way, O LORD, that I may walk in your truth; unite my heart to fear your name. I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart, and I will glorify your name forever. For great is your steadfast love toward me; you have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.” (Psalm 86:11–13, ESV)

The Savior's teaching here is certainly nothing new in the Scriptures. The call to Godliness is an essential element in our relationship with God. Scripture never give the impression that anyone whose life is characterized by wickedness or spiritual apathy has reason to believe he will see God.

Psalm 24 talks about this: "Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully. He will receive blessing from the Lord and righteousness from the God of his salvation. Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek the face of the God of Jacob. Selah " (Psalm 24:3–6, ESV) Don't misunderstand this. David is not saying that we must produce "clean hands and a pure heart" before God will receive us. David is telling us what Jesus is telling us -- that those who dwell with God, those who stand with Him, those who will be with Him one day, are marked by purity of thought, word, and deed. It's not a matter of us achieving a pure status that gains us entrance to God's presence, it's a matter of living out the character that is ours if we belong to God. The process of the practical purification of our hearts is seen in this: As our hearts grow in practical purity and singleness of heart, we increasingly love God, delight in God, long to be like God and eagerly anticipate the time when we will be with God. That is the process of purification through the effectual working of the Holy Spirit. The idea here is not perfection. To be pure in heart means to be a person who is whole-hearted in his faithfulness to God. In other words, not to be a hypocrite, not situational follower of God, but instead trusting God and worshipping God and loving God. No divided heart, no divided loyalties, no half-heartedness, no double-mindedness.

So beloved see this. God is the source of a pure heart. He does it positionally at salvation and practically during our earthly life as we obey the words of Scripture and submit to the leading of the Holy Spirit. He will do it finally and completely at the moment of our death or the moment of his return, whichever comes first, when we are brought into his glorious presence. Because of this certain hope, we strive now, empowered by His grace to yield to His shepherding care and discipline and become increasingly pure in heart. We do so in the confidence that: (2 Chronicles 16:9, ESV)

That is good news. Because, if we are honest, we must confess that none of us is perfectly pure of heart in practice. We desire to be, we long to be, but the reality of Romans 7 clings to us: (Romans 7:15–20, ESV) What are we do? There is only one hope. We must cry out to God for his continuing mercy and transforming and sustaining grace. We must cry out to God to give us a pure heart and to grow us in purity and in singleness of devotion to Him, confessing with the Apostle Paul: (Philippians 1:6, ESV) The God who has begun he work of salvation in you by regenerating you and giving you a new heart, a pure heart, will be faithful to complete his work

of salvation in you. For that reason, Paul can write: (Philippians 2:12–13, ESV) The truth that lies behind all of this is that God loves us and God is for us and God is at work in us. God's love for us is permanent and secure. It cannot change; He has placed it upon us in eternity past. God does not turn us away as we deal with sin in our lives and forsake it and seek to lay hold of purity and holiness. No. Scripture tells us: (1 John 1:9, ESV) He delights to actively pursue us and make us more and more holy as we pursue Him. He makes us to grow in purity of heart. As we grow in purity of heart, singleness of devotion, certain practices will become more and more evident on our lives.

### Practices of the Pure in Heart

The psalms of David can give us some insight into the practices of a pure heart. This is not a comprehensive list, but a picture.

A pure heart desires purity. He hates sin and longs for holiness and God's honor. (Psalm 26:2–7, ESV)

A pure heart is steadfast, serving God whole-heartedly and willing even to bear up under trials for the sake of being purified by Christ. (Psalm 57:4–7, ESV)

A pure heart takes care how he prepares for worship or any service unto the Lord. He sees himself as a willing slave unto the Lord. (Psalm 40:6–10, ESV)

A pure heart believer his devotional life, seeks God's face in prayer, and walks with God in daily life. (Psa 19:14)

A pure heart is filled with thanksgiving and rejoicing. (Psa 9:1)

The pure in heart have a full and unfailing trust in God that knows him as the strength and shield of his soul. (Psa 28:7) The underlying theme here is that a pure heart is a worshipping heart, isn't it? This is just small picture of what it looks like to have a single heart, a pure heart, and the promise is rich.

### 2) The Promise: They Shall See God

What does it mean that we will see God? I believe there are two parts to this promise. First that we will see God here and now. The more our hearts are focused on God, sincere, single --

the more we will see Him. As our hearts become purer, the more the Word of comes alive to us and we behold God and His glory, the glory of His Son, the work of His spirit in this Book. We behold His character as our eyes are opened to the true nature and person of our God. We perceive that He is holy and just and merciful and gracious, tender and mighty. We see God in His creation, all that He has made testifying to His perfection and glory. We behold Him in His church, in His people. We see the grace of God written all over the faces and the lives of the people of God. We will see Him in our answered prayers. We will see Him in our worship. We will see Him in the ministries that we engage in. We will behold Him manifested in our families. We will see evangelistic fervor in the heart of every man woman and child who truly knows Christ because they cannot remain silent about the glory of his or her God. Seeing God in this life is highest good, because those who see him become more and more like him. (2Co 3:18) The pure in heart will see God now.

Even more than that, we will see Him one day, face to face. In that split second of recognition we will experience infinitely more joy than the sum total of every joy of our entire lives. We will behold the dazzling blaze of His being that has been, and will always be, the abiding fascination of angels and the reason for our eternal worship. Then we shall behold him in all the radiance of his eternal glory! Scripture and reason demand it will be the greatest event of our existence — the vision of God. That glimpse of him will produce infinite numbers of new songs and I hope — new words — to express the worship and praise and worth of God.

Beloved, the gist of what Jesus is saying to us this morning is this. The pure in heart live a life that is indicative of a spiritual transformation, a life giving evidence of regeneration. Jesus is teaching that the character of our lives testifies regarding our spiritual state. This isn't a matter of works-righteousness, as if Jesus is promising a place with God to all those who live perfectly in this life; this is a matter of the reality of salvation in Christ, established by Him and for His glory, being on display as we grow day by day more and more into the image of God. And the pure in heart will receive the incomparable blessing of seeing the Lord face to face.

### 3) Guarding and Cultivating Purity in Heart

Beloved, I trust that it is your desire to be pure in heart, that out of love for the God who has loved you with a steadfast and saving love, your desire is to live in manner that reflects a single-minded, single-hearted, devotion to God and His Lordship and glory. How do we cultivate that?

This is not a to do list. This is not a list on how to get a pure heart, but rather how to we grow in singleness and purity of heart before the Lord?

Feast upon on the Word of God. If you are serious about seeking purity in your life, it must come through the Word of God, through reading and believing and thinking God's thoughts. In Psalm 119:9ff., the psalmist asks a question, (Psalm 119:9–11, ESV)

Pray for purity. He prayer of David in Psalm 51:10 is a good place to start: "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me." Psalm 139 -- (Psalm 139:23–24, ESV)

Draw near to God in prayer. There is no way I can be pure of heart without the ongoing work of radical transformation in my heart through the powerful and abiding presence of His Spirit.

Be promptly obedient to the commands of God. Delayed obedience will lead to a disaffected heart and the justification of sin.

Watch what we watch, read, and listen to.

Embrace trials, hardship, and discipline as God's cleansing fire. The Bible says, "The crucible is for silver, and the furnace is for gold, and the LORD tests hearts." (Proverbs 17:3).

Fellowship with the People of God. It is an encouragement to the pursuit of God and the cultivating of a pure heart. It's why the writer of Hebrews says: (Hebrews 10:24–25, ESV)

Focus on the prize. If you're serious about pursuing purity, you'll quickly discover that this is a lifelong battle. Don't despair. Don't bail. Keep your eyes focused on the prize. God reserves intimate fellowship with Himself to those who are unmixed in their devotion, and unmasked in their relationship with Him.

Are you pure in heart, in both senses of the word?

1) Are you cleansed of the defilement of your sin?

2) Are you single of heart?

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