

## How to be Pure in Heart

**Matthew 5:8 and 6:9-24**

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We believe in the communion of the saints. This means that neither death, nor time nor can geography break the spiritual unity that Christians have with one another. Today we honor the saints, especially those who dwell on the other side of death from us in the glory of God, as well as those children and adults who have been newly baptized into our family this year. The saints in heaven are those who no longer see a poor reflection as in a mirror but now see God face to face. Their hearts have been made once and forever pure.

Blessed are the poor in spirit: by this we learned we cannot do it alone; we need help. Blessed are the meek: by this we learned to put Jesus first, others second and ourselves third. Blessed are those who mourn: by this we learned to bear our suffering well, not deny or escape it. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness: by this we learned to seek God's dream for our lives. Blessed are the merciful: by this we learned to place ourselves into the virtuous circle started by Jesus Christ. All of these beatitudes have been purifying our hearts and preparing us for Matthew 5:8: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

C.S. Lewis observed that it was safe for Jesus to say the pure in heart will see God, because only the pure in heart would want to. What is a pure heart? At first, we might think of moral purity here. Jesus spent a lot of time talking about inward holiness. He was very harsh with a certain type of religious people who were obsessed with keeping rules and enforcing regulations, even while their hearts were full of arrogance, lust and selfishness. He said to them, "You clean the outside...but inside you are full of greed and wickedness." (Luke 11:39) On another occasion, he said, "What comes out of a man is what makes him 'unclean.' For from within, out of men's hearts come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly..." (Mark 7:21-23)

Jesus did not come into this world to bring new rules for us to follow or to design a new morality. He came to wash our hearts clean. He came to bring spiritual cleansing and

rebirth to the human heart. He said, “No one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.” (John 3:3) It is by faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ that our hearts are cleansed, reformed and filled with the Holy Spirit. And by means of the Holy Spirit, we put to death the deeds of the body. The Holy Spirit in a believer’s heart is the engine and guarantor of moral purity: a pure heart. The Bible says, “God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit whom he has given us.” (Romans 5:5)

But a pure heart really means something more than moral purity. It means an undivided heart. We have a word for this: *sincerity*. In the words of Matthew 6:24, it means to serve one and only one master. A smart aleck once observed that the secret to success is sincerity; once you can fake that, you’ve got it made! The Bible says that “love must be sincere.” (Romans 12:9) To be sincere in your love for God is to be without hypocrisy or deceit.

A lot of people live multiple lives: they are one person at school, another person when they are with their friends, yet another at home and yet another at church. They change their personality like they would a Halloween costume. The sad thing is, many people have been living like this for so long that they no longer recognize what is real and what is a lie. If you have to hide any part of your life from others or from yourself, then your heart is not pure. If you have to hide the beverages you consume or the websites you visit or the conversations you have, that is a real good indication you are living a double or a triple live instead of a single life.

To have a pure heart is to let the Faith flow freely through your life; in every nook and cranny. Faith is not a matter of intellectual ability. It is an innate ability that God has planted in every human being. God designed us for faith. But as animals in a zoo lose some of their natural instincts, so we too lose our ability to believe when we are outside our native habitat. Therefore we need to wise up and surround ourselves with positive, believing people. Get into a fellowship, a prayer group, a Bible Study, a church.

Having *wised up*, we need to *clean up* the negative emotions that block the Spirit from flowing through our hearts. Do we have sin that we have not confessed? Have we hurt someone else and not apologized? Are we keeping secrets about illegal or immoral activity? Do we think ourselves to be hopeless losers who will never fit in?

One day, Leonardo DaVinci was painting the face of Christ in his workshop. A little boy came in and clumsily stumbled and knocked over the artist's canvas he was so carefully painting. DaVinci blew up: he shouted and scream and chased after the boy who fled the scene in terror and wet pants. Returning to his workshop, DaVinci found he could no longer paint. So he left in search of the boy and found him out in the streets. He said, "Forgive me, even as Christ forgives. I have done something worse...I have blocked the flow of God into my life. Will you come back with me?"

Having *wised up* and *cleaned up* it is then time to *take up*. Take up God's call to do something great with your life. Take on a project; take up a cause; above all take up the mission of Jesus Christ in this world. A pure piece of paper is not one that is plain and white but one that is filled with ink, serving the great purpose for which it was made. Similarly, a pure heart is not empty but alive and animated with God's dreams.

The world says, "Seeing is believing." But the Bible says, "believing is seeing."

To see God means to encounter him everywhere in nature and in life. Elizabeth Barrett Brownings' poem goes like this: "The earth's crammed with heaven, and every common bush is aflame with God. Those who see take off their shoes, all the rest pluck blackberries." The pure in heart see God's intelligent design, God's awesome power and God's caring providence in the forest of oaks that surrounds us, as well as in the smallest shaft of sunlight filtered through a fragment of broken glass on the side walk.

To see God means to encounter him in the Bible. "Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law." (Psalm 119:18) People have been seeing God in this book for millennia. That is why it is a Holy Book. What I really need to understand the Bible is not a sharp mind but a pure heart.

To see God means to encounter him in Holy Communion, Our Lord's Supper. I love the story in Luke 24 about the two disciples walking with the Risen Christ to the little village of Emmaus on Easter Sunday evening. At first they did not recognize him, but when he blessed the bread, broke it and gave it to them at the end of the day, Luke says, "Their eyes were opened and they recognized him..." (Luke 24:31) This is not a funny little ritual we perform once a month; it is the presence of Christ among his people.

To see God is to encounter him in Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father." (John 14:9) Many people have spent all their lives searching for

God, when this entire time he has been standing in front of human history, dwelling in the human flesh of Jesus. The problem has never been in the eye or in the mind but in the heart. Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God.