

Upside Down Kingdom: Blessed are the Pure Matthew 5:8ⁱ

INTRODUCTION:

Good morning, Trinity! It is good to see you this morning. For those of you that are guests, my name is Chris Wigley, and I serve as one of the Pastors here at Trinity. Whether you are in the room or you are joining us online, we are certainly glad you are with us today. And on behalf of our church family, we welcome you.

We would love the opportunity to get to connect with you. If you would, simply text the keyword, "TBCMP," that stands for Trinity Baptist Church Mt. Pleasant, to 94-000. You will then be prompted to click on a link that will provide us with basic contact information to follow up with you. And here's our promise to you... we promise not to bombard your inbox. Again, we would love the opportunity to connect with you and to pray for you.

SERIES OVERVIEW:

We are in the middle of a series called, "The Upside Down Kingdom." We are looking at the Beatitudes in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapter 5. So, I want to invite you to take your bibles and turn with me to Matthew 5 as we zoom in on verse 8.

By the way, if you do not have a bible with you this morning, there is one in the seat tray of the seat in front of you. And if you do not own a Bible, please feel free to take that one. Those are the bibles were donated to us, and we would love to pass that along to you.

OPENING ILLUSTRATION: Half Fullⁱⁱ

I have a little survey that I want to conduct this morning that requires your participation. I have here in my hand a glass of water. When you see this glass, how do you describe it?

How many of you, by a show of hands, say, "That glass is half full"? These are the people that we would call optimist. You are the type of people that try to look at things in life from a positive outlook.

How many of you would say, "That glass is half empty"? This is the more pessimistic point of view. What you would say is a realistic view.

Well, when it comes to the Christian life, we are called to experience life altogether differently. I have heard it said that a believer in Jesus Christ sees life, real life, as David puts it in Psalm 23:5, "*my cup overflows.*" The life of the believer, of a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven, is not one of half. Jesus said in John 10:10, "*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.*"

In the Beatitudes, Jesus is talk about what it means to be blessed, to be happy. In other words, how to experience the abundant life. Today's beatitudes teaches the value of purity in experiencing the abundant life of Jesus' Kingdom.

Now, this is completely different from the way the world sees the abundant life. It is upside down. The kingdom of this world says to pursue wants, desire,s to follow your heart in the pursuit of happiness. The problem with that line of thinking is that our hearts, according to Jeremiah, "*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?*" And Jesus says, if you want true life, true and lasting happiness, it is rooted in the pursuit of purity in our lives.

Let's take a look at Jesus' teaching here today as we look at the heart of purity, the result of purity, and the way to purity.

MESSAGE:

Follow along in your copy of God's Word. Matthew chapter 5, verses 3-8.

³ "*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* ⁴ "*Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.* ⁵ "*Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.* ⁶ "*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.* ⁷ "*Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.* ⁸ "*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*"

Let's begin our study by looking at...

1) The Heart of Purity.

In the first part of this Beatitude, Jesus uses the words pure and heart. *Blessed are the pure in heart*, He says. What does it mean to be pure in heart? Well, in using these words Jesus drives home what He is after in people that live according to the Kingdom of Heaven. The word translated "pure" means to be clean, blameless, and unstained. It is a word that is packed full of meaning, in fact there are two aspects to this word.

The word does not mean something that has never been dirty.ⁱⁱⁱ In other words, it speaks of something that has been refined or pruned. It is often used to talk about the process by which metals are rid of their imperfections. When we talk about something that is pure gold, we are referring to gold that has been purified, rid of its imperfections, by way of a process. It is pure gold.

So, when Jesus is referring to being pure here, He is referring to something that was dirty and has been cleansed. This is really good news because for us we know all too well the sinfulness of our own hearts. In fact, Scripture proclaims, and we can testify, Romans 3:23, *“**23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.**”* And while all of our hearts have been stained by sin, by way of the glorious work of the cross, Jesus took all our sin and imputed, that is He gave, us all His perfection. Therefore, in Christ, we have been purified, refined, to the glory of God. That’s the first aspect to this word, “pure.”

The second aspect to the word “pure,” is that it refers to being unmixed. In other words, purity in regards to integrity, or authenticity. When someone is pure, there is a consistency to the purity. It is pure, or true, through and through.

One might say that the two aspects to purity is both internal and external. A pure heart internally and purity lived out externally. True purity is demonstrated when internal purity lines up with external purity. Now, this is where Jesus’ statement begins to be upside down to the world of His day.

There were, in this crowd, those that had been influenced by the religious teaching of the day that would have initially said “Amen!” to Jesus’ statement about being purified, or cleansed. Those that believed by way of the process of ceremonial cleansing one is made pure. But that’s external.

Jesus directed the attention to exactly what must be pure. He said, *“**Blessed are the pure in heart,**”* the inside. He is not drawing attention to the organ, the heart organ, but the spirit. Where thoughts, desires, understanding, and character reside.

The reason why this is an important distinction is because it is possible to have the appearance of purity on the outside and yet not possess it on the inside. Ceremonial cleansing cleaned the outside, but Jesus says He is far more concerned about purity on the inside, the heart.

It was the religious leaders of Jesus’ day that displayed the disconnect between the external and the internal. In other words, they had the appearance of righteousness on the outside but were rotten on the inside.

Jesus said to them in Matthew 23:27, *“**27 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people’s bones and all uncleanness.”**”*

Jesus is driving at the heart of purity. Secondly, Jesus talks about...

2) The Result of Purity.

He says, *“**Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.**”* Inward and outward purity of heart grants one the ability to see God. This is a huge payoff.

When we read this, perhaps you have an interpretation come to your mind. For example, does this mean that those who are truly pure in heart get to visibly see God?

As is the case with many different words, the English language often misses the detail that helps us understand passages like this. Like the word love. I can love my wife and I can love Wingstop. That is not the same kind of love. Right?! All the fellas in the room need to go like this [nod head] right now.

Like there are different words for love in the Greek, there are different words for see. One word in the original language that we translate as “see” means to see with the eye. This is an object that we actually see.

ILLUSTRATION: Seeing the Mountains

I love to go snow skiing. One of the reasons that I love skiing are the views that you get when you get to the top of the mountain. You can see all the different peaks. It’s absolutely beautiful.

That is one word for see, what we see with our eyes. Another word that we translate “see,” is the idea of participation in an event. When we go to a concert, to go see someone or a band in concert. Or we go see a movie. We go, we make observations, we walk out and we’ve seen a concert or movie.

Then there is a third word that we translate as “see.” It is to see and to know. This word is much more than physically seeing something. It is to get to know someone.

ILLUSTRATION: Seeing Someone

I'm going to really show my age and the fact that I am growing to be more and more outdated. But remember when you were dating? Maybe it is your now spouse, but when you were dating, do you remember what you would say about one another? I'm seeing someone. I'm seeing Cathy. In other words, I'm dating Cathy. It's much more than physically seeing one another. It's getting to know one another. Learning about one another.

Well, this is the idea that Jesus is talking about. He is not saying that the pure in heart will physically see God. The only human, outside of the humanity of Jesus, to ever physically see the fullness of God was Adam and Eve. God would walk with them in the Garden of Eden. But what happened when they sinned? They hid from God, ultimately banished from the Garden, and could no longer physically see God.

Moses asked to see God but remember what happened? Moses would not be able to see God without dying. So, God just revealed his back. What about in Revelation chapter 1 when the Apostle John saw the glorified Jesus? He fell at His feet as though a dead man. We do not in our limited humanity have the capacity to physically see God. But we can get to know God. And this is what Jesus is saying. The pure in heart know God.

Purity and our ability to know God and discern His will for our lives are directly correlated. When Jesus says the pure in heart, "they," shall see God, he emphasizes the word, "they." In other words, **only** the pure in heart shall see, shall get to know, God.

I heard a Pastor once say, "You can't pursue God and tolerate sin. If we think that we can persist in sin, knowing that we are sinning, and still know God, we are deceived."^{iv} Sin affects our fellowship with God and therefore hinders our ability to hear God and know His will for our lives.

But purity leads to perception. The more we pursue purity they more we will correctly perceive God, His ways, and our hearts will align to His heart.

So, Jesus gets to the heart of purity and we see the result of purity. Now, let's look at...

3) The Way to Purity.

I think we can grasp and understand the importance of living lives of integrity and the role that plays in our fellowship with God. But the question this comes, "How can we develop lives of integrity?" What are some practical aspects to living lives of purity? Allow me to offer four ways we can be a people that pursue purity in our lives. 4 practices to purity.

A) Confession

It is impossible for us, this side of glory, to be completely pure of heart. As a result, we should make confession of our sin a regular practice in our lives.

Remember King David, a man after God's own heart? In Psalm 139:23-24 he prays, *"²³ Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! ²⁴ And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!"*

Just like secrets hinder our earthly relationships with one another, unconfessed sin, secret sin, impedes our relationship with God. Sin severs our connection to God. As a result, to live lives of purity we must confess sin to God. And the Good News is that because of Jesus, God forgives. 1 John 1:9 says that, *"⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*

I think we see this idea as Jesus structures the Beatitudes. To get to a point where we live lives of purity, we must cherish mercy, and hunger and thirst for righteousness. And that pursuit comes from being poor in spirit and mourning the effects of sin. That positions us to demonstrate meekness.

I think it is important to also say here that confession is not what earns our salvation, but it maintains our connection. We are saved, justified, because of our faith and trust in the finished work of Jesus on the cross, not because we confess our sin. But the practice of confession maintains our connection with God. It reminds us that we are sinners in need to God's forgiveness and that leads us to pursue purity.

So, how can we live pure lives? Confession. Secondly, ...

B) Study

Become a student of God's Word. Hebrews 4:12 says, *"¹² For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division*

*of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and **discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.***

Listen, if Jesus is after purity of heart, we must align our hearts to the Word of God. And as we study God's Word, it cuts us^v. It reveals areas of our lives that need to be surrendered to the Lordship of Christ. It answers David's prayer. Search my heart, reveal where I am wayward, and lead me in God's path.

This is opposite to our tendency, isn't it? We have a tendency to want to make the Bible fit our views, to justify our sin. But that's not what Scripture says about itself. It does not justify sin it exposes sin. Purity reveals the truth and impurity obscures the truth.

Want to see and know God? Practice confession and study God's Word. Thirdly, ...

C) Guard

Living lives of purity requires that we guard our hearts. As the great hymn, Come Thou Fount, echoes, *"Prone to wander, Lord I feel it, Prone to leave the God I love. Here's my heart, oh take and seal it, Seal it for Thy courts above."*

Because of our natural tendency to drift away from God and toward sin, we have to guard our hearts. Proverbs 4:23 says, *"Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life."* The idea here being to guard your heart, protect your heart at all costs, and by all measures. We should, "pull out all the stops," when it comes to protecting the purity of our hearts.

One of the ways you guard your heart is by what you allow your eyes to see, your ears to hear, and where you allow your feet to go. Let me say that again. The way we guard our hearts is by what you allow your eyes to see, your ears to hear, and where you allow your feet to go. Listen, our hearts are prone to pursue sin over purity, our natural tendency is to embrace sin, therefore, protect your heart at all costs.

Confess, Study, guard, and fourthly...

D) Devotion

Be devoted to the things of God. I mentioned earlier that one of the aspects of the word for purity is the idea of being unmixed. In other words, we must be

completely devoted to the Kingdom of Heaven. We cannot have a mixed approach to God's Kingdom.

Jesus says it this way, ²⁴ *"No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money."* [Or as the King James puts it, "You cannot serve both God and mammon."] Jesus isn't just talking about money here. He is speaking about what we allow ourselves to be devoted to. The Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of this world. And here's the deal, one or those will win out. Devotion to one will push the other out. Therefore, be devoted to The Lord.

Living lives of purity means that we cannot be in love for the things of the world **and** in love for the things of God. Not that gain is evil, you understand, but if we are holding onto the sinful things of the world and wanting God's blessings at the same time, then we are not solely devoted to the Kingdom of Heaven. James called that being double-minded and unstable.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. 4 practices to pursuing purity. Confession, Study, Guarding our heart, and devotion to God.

CONCLUSION:

As we come to a time of response in our service this morning, I want to ask Jared and the band to come back up and lead us in that time of response. And as they are coming, I want you to consider how The Lord is stirring in your heart.

Are you pure in heart? Is there an area of your life where you need to allow the Holy Spirit to do heart surgery? To rid your life of the impurity within you?

Perhaps you are here this morning, or have joined us online, and you have never fully surrendered to Jesus as the Lord, the boss, of your life. Don't miss the promise of what Jesus is teaching here. It is possible to see God, to get to know God. But first, one must be saved. Saved from what? The sin in our lives have separated us from a holy God and condemned us to an eternity in a very real place called hell. But, thanks be to God, He has provided a rescue. Because of His marvelous grace, and by faith in Jesus, we can be saved. We can be purified, refined, and much more, regenerated, reborn!

ENDNOTES:

ⁱ Works consulted in preparation of this sermon: John MacArthur, *Matthew 1-7 MacArthur New Testament Commentary*; David Guzik, *Study Guide for Matthew 5*, Blue Letter Bible; David Brown, *The Gospel According to Matthew Commentary*, Matthew 5:1-16; Jack Graham, *A Man of God: Essentials Priorities for Every Man's Life*, 2005; Gregory Brown, *Blessed Are the Pure in Heart (Matthew 5:8)*, article published April 4, 2020, Bible.org; Dave Jenkins, *Following the Beatitudes: Why are the 'Pure in Heart' Blessed?*, article written February 25, 2021, accessed on bibliestudytools.com; Got Questions, *What Does it Mean to be Pure in Heart?* article accessed November 9, 2021, gotquestions.org; Grant Ethridge, *What Does the Bible Say About Being Pure in Heart? – Matthew 5:8*, article written November 16, 2020, accessed at libertylive.church on November 9, 2021; Ligonier Ministries, *Blessed are the Pure in Heart*, article published November 28, 2011, Ligonier.org, accessed November 9, 2021; Scott Worthington, *Radical Red Letters: Blessed Are the Pure in Heart*, message preached October 25, 2020 at Hope Church Las Vegas; Michael Gossett, *The Upside Down Life: Pursuing Purity*, preached October 25, 2021 at Green Acres Baptist Church; Skip Heitzig, *Expound, Matthew 5:5-16*, Calvary Church Albuquerque, October 19, 2011; J.D. Greear, *The Whole Story: 8 Ways to Be Happy, According to Jesus*, Summit Church, September 25, 2016.

ⁱⁱ Illustration adapted from Jack Graham used in a sermon on Ephesians 5 entitled, *A Pure Walk in a Polluted World*, preached at Prestonwood Baptist Church on July 19, 2020.

ⁱⁱⁱ I borrowed this phrasing from Pastor Scott Worthington.

^{iv} J.D. Greear, *The Whole Story: 8 Ways to be Happy, According to Jesus*.

^v Wording inspired by article written by Dave Jenkins, *Following the Beatitudes: Why are the 'Pure in Heart' Blessed?*, accessed on bibliestudytools.com.