

Matthew

Sermon on the Mount

March 03, 2024

I. Introduction

- A. **Matthew 5:3-12**, “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 gentle (*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. [9] Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. [10] Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. [11] Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. [12] Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”
- B. To **hunger and thirst for righteousness** is to relentlessly and purposefully (*have a plan / work the plan*) drive yourself toward a godliness that transforms your heart, mind, attitudes, beliefs, values, words, and deeds. Though such a pursuit often begins as a well-reasoned decision, if pursued long enough, it will turn into a passion similar to the longing for food when starving and water when thirsty.
- C. **Mercy** is one of those areas of life where God treats us in the way we treat others. Therefore, showing mercy to others (*when they need it*) puts you in the position to receive mercy from God (*when you need it*). **Compassion** is an essential part of **mercy**, because it enables you to see the situation through the eyes and feelings of the one asking for mercy. Therefore, compassion promotes mercy while the lack of compassion thwarts mercy.
- D. Remember, the word “blessed” can also be translated “happy.” However, happiness does not appear on its own, it comes as a result of something else – which is why we pursue the things that make us happy. This is a universal principle of life – a principle which God created for our benefit, and which the devil takes advantage of in order to do us harm. These eight beatitudes offer us a proven path to true and lasting happiness. Though alternative paths bring temporary happiness, they also bring loss, pain, and suffering – in this life and in the next. Therefore, choosing the way of the beatitudes is choosing a life of happiness – now and forever.
- E. Pray

- II. [8] Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.
- A. What might Jesus mean when He says the pure in heart shall see God?
1. The word “shall” infers something in the future. Does that mean a future that is only in the next life (*eternity*), or could the future begin sometime in this life?
 2. If a pure heart is a requirement for seeing God, does that mean your heart has to be perfectly pure? If so, who of us can attain to such perfection? If not, who decides what is pure enough?
 3. And what about seeing God? Is Jesus speaking of seeing God in this life or in the next, with our physical eyes or with our spiritual eyes, actually or in a vision or dream or as one of the manifestations of God, such as Moses’ burning bush, or Israel’s cloud and pillar of fire?
- B. We will begin by looking at seeing God
1. In **Exodus 33:20**, God said, “You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!”
 2. When God says no one can see Him and live, He is speaking about earthly beings, that is, those who are still in an earthly, human form.
 3. This is supported in:
 - a. **John 1:18**, No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.
 - b. **1 Timothy 6:16**, [God] alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see.
 4. However, though we mortals cannot see God as He is, we will be able to see Him in the after-life, that is, in eternity.
 - a. **1 John 3:2**, Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because **we will see Him just as He is**.
 5. Though the scriptures just referenced say no one can see God, there are scriptures where people say they have seen God.
 - a. For example, **Genesis 32:30**, So Jacob named the place Peniel (*pih NIGH el*), for he said, “I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been preserved.”
 - b. What did Jacob see, God or a manifestation of God? The story says that **a man** wrestled with Jacob – who blessed him and renamed him, Israel. I believe the man was God in the form of a human, which means Jacob saw a manifestation of God, not God himself.
 - c. In other scripture stories, we read that the angel of God, or the angel of the Lord appeared. Some of those who had this experience describe it as seeing God – and go on to express astonishment that they are still alive. Yet what they saw was a manifestation of God.

6. But what about Moses? He had a special relationship with God, a relationship that the scripture describes as face to face (**Exodus 33:11**). How do we explain this?
 - a. Our best explanation is God's explanation found in **Numbers 12:5-8**, Then the LORD came down in a **pillar of cloud** (*God was there, but He manifested himself as a pillar of cloud*) and stood at the doorway of the tent, and He called Aaron and Miriam. When they had both come forward, [6] He said, "Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, shall make Myself known to him in a vision. I shall speak with him in a dream. [7] Not so, with My servant Moses, he is faithful in all My household; [8] with him I speak mouth to mouth, even openly, and not in dark sayings, and **he beholds the form** of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid to speak against My servant, against Moses?"
 - b. There is no doubt that Moses had a unique relationship with God. And it seems Moses heard God speak – not as a voice in his mind, but as sound in his ears. But did he see God in this life like we all will see God in the next? No.
 - c. When it came to seeing God, **Numbers 12:8** says Moses saw a "**form** of God." And when Moses asked to see God's glory, **Exodus 33:23** says Moses only saw the back-side of God – and that from a distance.
 7. As for seeing God today, I don't doubt that the angel of God still appears on occasion. I don't doubt that God still reveals himself in visions and dreams. And I don't doubt that such experiences are supernatural. Yet it is not God, himself, that is being seen. It is a manifestation of God, just as Jesus was a manifestation of God.
- C. Though these explanations give us an idea of what Jesus did not mean when He said the pure in heart see God, they don't tell us what He meant. Therefore, to help us go further in clarifying what Jesus meant, let me present two assumptions and two facts.
1. **First assumption:** It is possible to interact with God in this life in a way that can reasonably be described as seeing God – even though we are not seeing God in the way we will see Him in eternity.
 2. **Second assumption:** Though purity of heart may never be perfectly achieved in this life, we can go far enough in that direction to imperfectly see God in this life and see Him perfectly in the next.
 3. **First fact:** purity of heart is a pre-requisite, and therefore a required condition, for seeing God – whether in this life or the next.

4. **Second fact:** all who enter God's eternal kingdom will see God as He is, but not all Christians in this life will see God in the way the pure in heart are able to see Him in this life.
- D. Given what we have talked about so far, I think we can agree we will see God in eternity. Therefore, seeing Him in this life is the part that needs some clarification.
1. The Bible speaks of believers who have had a very real, very personal, and very intimate relationship with God while still living in this world. The Bible also confirms the link between purity of heart (*or holiness of life*) and having the depth of relationship with God that can be described as seeing God in this life. For example:
 - a. **Genesis 5:24**, Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.
 - b. **Genesis 6:9b**, Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God.
 - c. **Psalms 24:3-4**, Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD (*Holy of Holies*)? And who may stand in His holy place? [4] He who has **clean hands** and a **pure heart**, who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood and has not sworn deceitfully. (Note: **Psalms 15:1-5**)
 - d. **2 Corinthians 6:16-7:1**, Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "**I will dwell in them and walk among them**; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. [17] Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate," says the Lord. "and do not touch what is unclean (*conditions*); and I will welcome you. [18] And I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me," says the Lord Almighty. [7:1] Therefore, having **these promises**, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from **all** defilement of **flesh** and **spirit** (*conditions*), **perfecting** (*bringing to completion*) holiness in the fear of God.
 - e. **Hebrews 12:14**, Pursue peace with all men, and (*pursue*) the sanctification (*that which purifies us so that we are able to see God*) without which no one will see the Lord.
 - f. **1 John 1:6-7**, If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness (*claim to walk with God yet live as those who do not walk with God*), we lie and do not practice the truth; [7] but if we walk in the Light (*truth, righteousness*) **as He** Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin (*so we can continue having*

deeply personal and intimate fellowship with God, for sin pushes God away from us – thus creating a distance in the relationship that makes it impossible to see God.)

- g. **1 John 3:2-3**, “Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because **we will see Him** just as He is. [3] And everyone who has this hope fixed on [seeing] Him [as He is] **purifies himself**, just as He is pure. (*Why? Because purity of heart and life is what enables us to see God, while an impure heart and life prevents us from seeing God.*)
 - h. **1 John 3:6**, No one who abides in [God] (*knowingly and willfully practices*) sins; no one who (*knowingly and willfully practices*) sins has seen [God] or knows Him.
 - 2. According to my understanding of these scriptures, **IF** we seriously and consistently pursue a pure heart, then we can enter into a depth of relationship with God where, in some undefinable, mystical way, we can see God. And when I speak of seeing God in this way, I mean being keenly aware that He is as real and present and interactive as the rest of us here today are real, present, and interactive.
- E. Why is purity of heart a requirement to see God when we have been redeemed, forgiven, and clothed with the righteousness of Christ?
- 1. Because it is your heart that houses your beliefs, values, longings, passions, and fears – the very things that drive your thoughts, words, and deeds.
 - 2. Therefore, when your heart is pure, or at least well on its way to becoming pure, its purity radiates into your thoughts, desires, words, and deeds. When this happens, you become – or at least are becoming in very real and practical ways – a new creature with a new nature that is able to see God.
 - 3. And if you pursue this kind of purity of heart and holiness of life far enough and long enough (*I don't know what far enough, or long enough, or pure enough, or holy enough is*) then it is probable you will see God (*in some undefinable, mystical way*), just as Jesus says you will.
- F. If a pure heart is required for seeing God, does that mean your heart has to be perfectly pure? If so, who of us can attain to such perfection? If not, who decides what is pure enough?
- 1. We know from **Leviticus 4:13-35** that God made provision for sins committed in ignorance, that is, either not knowing it was a sin or

- not being aware of having sinned. While the ignorance remained, God did not act against the sinner(s) regarding that area of sin. But once it became known that a sin had been committed, those who committed the sin were – in essence – to confess, repent, and offer the appropriate sacrifice if they wanted to maintain a proper relationship with God.
- a. I believe we can apply this same truth to us today based on **1 John 1:9**: If we confess our sins (*what we know*), He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from **all** unrighteousness (*known and unknown*).
 - b. The implication of this is that my heart is only as pure as the sin I am putting out of my heart and the godliness I am putting in its place – which means the sin I am committing in ignorance is still in my heart and making it impure to that degree.
 - c. However, God covers that degree of impurity **IF** I am properly dealing with the areas of sin I know about and making an honest effort to pursue godliness in those areas of my life.
2. Therefore, it is my understanding that though your heart may have ongoing impurity in it because of sins committed in ignorance, a whole-hearted effort on your part to deal honestly with what you know is sin will be treated by God as a worthy pursuit of a pure heart.
 3. And if you pursue this kind of purity of heart, or holiness of life long enough and far enough (*even though we do not know when enough is enough*) then it is probable you will see God, just as this beatitude says we will (*though it may be in some undefinable, mystical way*).

III. Conclusion

- A. The important question is not what do you see, but do you want to see?
- B. Sin darkens, righteousness enlightens. Sin is like a thick fog. Godliness is like a clear day – where you can see forever. Sin makes you an enemy of God. Holiness makes you His friend. Sin blocks your vision. Purity of heart removes the blockage so you can see. Sin puts miles between you and God. A pure heart brings you near enough to God and into the kind of intimate relationship with God that enables you to see Him – in some form – in this life.
- C. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God – possibly now, but sure forever.