

The Pure in Heart Shall See God

The Beatitudes #7

Matthew 5:8

Then Jesus said to Phillip: How can you say, "show us the Father?" Truly I tell you, Phillip, whoever has seen me has seen the Father.

They were off to see the wizard, the wonderful Wizard of Oz. They'd find that he was a wiz of a wiz if ever a wiz there was. Oh, if ever a wiz there was, the Wizard of Oz is one because, because, because, because. Because of the wonderful things he does. The Scarecrow needed a brain. The Tin Man needed a heart. The Lion needed courage. And Dorothy and Toto needed to go home. However, all was not well in the Land of Oz for the sojourners. When they got to the castle, the wonderful Wizard of Oz was hidden from their sight. They wanted to see him. They wanted his blessing. They wanted his favor. But they got a wall, a curtain, and a veil instead.

There's a reason the Wizard of Oz still finds its way to the Top 20 of the bestsellers lists though almost 100 years old. It's this: we know that in this life we will never see the face of God literally. But we would sure like to see his handiwork in our lives, most especially in the areas that we have summoned the courage to journey to his castle and asked him to intervene in. Yet, when we do, we feel like we don't get answers. We get a wall, a curtain, and a veil instead. Consequently, we don't "see" Him the way the ancients saw him even though we desperately wish to.

That's precisely why beatitude #6 is the most assuring, comforting, encouraging, and hopeful of them all for me. Here's why: "blessed are the pure in heart; for they will see God. But like many promises of God, this beatitude has a number of riddles to solve in order to experience it. There is (a) the riddle of the heart; (b) the riddle of purity; (c) the riddle of purification; and (d) the riddle of seeing God that we have to get on the right side of in order to grab hold of the promise. Solve the riddles and the wall is removed and the curtains and the veils are torn. And we will see God.

1. The Riddle of the Heart

- **The Valentine's Day Cards She Hates:** (1) My wife doesn't like the cheesy cards I produce for her on Valentine's Day, which is precisely why I still produce them: (a) "you make my heart skip a beat more than a nice warm bottle of Pepto Bismol." (b) "Salt may melt the ice. But you, my prime rib, melt my heart."
- **Our Definitions of the Heart Follow a Similar Logic:** (1) We have phrases regarding the heart that we use all the time: (a) "my mind says one thing, but my heart says another" (My emotions trump my rationality). (b) His "heart is in the right place" (he's well intentioned). (c) He "wears his heart on his sleeve" (He openly shows his emotions). (2) That's because in our language, we use "heart" as a metaphor for our emotions. We feel something "in our heart" and are therefore inclined to "follow our heart."
- **But the Bible's Usage of the Heart is Different:** (1) In the Scriptures, the "heart" is a metaphor for everything that you are at the core of your being: (a) your emotions, (b) your rationality; (c) your conscience; (d) your body; and (e) that vital organ inside of you. It's the biblical metaphoric "catch all" for describing everything that makes up who you are. (2) It's why Solomon told us to "*trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways, acknowledge him and he will make your path straight*" (Prov 3:5-6), and why Jesus told us that one of the greatest commandments is "*love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength* (Matt 22:37).
- **But There's A Great Problem with the Heart:** (1) Jeremiah (17:9) tells us "*the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can understand it?*" (2) He's not alone. Isaiah said that Satan's desire to be like the Most High began in his "heart" (Is 14:13-14). And Jesus said: "*But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, and blasphemes*" (Matt 15:18-19)
- **Therefore, the Blessing of Seeing God:** (1) Doesn't extend to those who have their "heart in the right place," or "do what's in their heart," or "follow their heart." Why? Because the heart is deceitful. It's self-centered. It's desperately wicked. And, according to Jesus, is the place that from which those things that defile us originate. (2) There has to be a quality added to it in order for that blessing to unfold. It's the quality of purity. If "purity" isn't added to the heart, "seeing God" isn't a blessing. It is a Great White Throne of Judgment Curse (Rev 20).

2. The Riddle of Purity

- **Soap:** (1) Praise the Lord for soap. I like it and use it often. I used to be a Dial man. But now I'm an Irish Spring man. (2) But Dial and Irish Spring are anathemas for soap purists. Because for soap purists, there's only one brand worth arming yourself with in your battle against uncleanness. It's that one brand that claims be 99.7% pure and gives you a safe pure clean trusted for generations. It's Ivory. The pure soap without mixture. But since it's expensive, I'm going to take my chances with Irish Spring.
- **Purity in the Scriptures:** (1) The concept of purity is important enough to biblical writers that they were inspired to speak of it in virtually every book of the Bible. We see it discussed in issues related to ritual cleanness/uncleanness and spiritual purity and impurity. (2) The word "purity" is used three different ways in the Scriptures: (a) "Clean and unstained from guilt." "*Create in me a clean heart, Oh God, and renew a steadfast Spirit within me,*" David says in Ps 51 after his sin with Bathsheba. (b) "Without mixture." "*Who shall ascend to the mountain of the Most High? He who has clean hands and a pure heart and will not swear by what is false*" (Psalm 24). (c) "Sincerity." "*Purify your hearts, you double-minded. Resist the devil and he will flee from you*" (James 4:7-8).

- **But the Problem Came in Trying to Achieve Purity for the Pharisees:** (1) They defined purity as an external virtue. It's why they washed their hands and dressed in their Sunday best Monday – Saturday. They looked the part. They acted the part. But for Jesus, purity begins internally and manifests itself outwardly through action, not appearance. Zacchaeus was a wee little man who got saved in a Sycamore Tree. Then he came down and stopped exploiting people by collecting taxes. Appearances were immaterial. Internal purity is what mattered.
- **Therefore, Now We've Got a Major Problem:** (1) If the heart is deceitful and purity starts internally and manifests itself outwardly, how in the world is purity possible to attain? (2) You have to be made pure. And that only comes through the Blood of Jesus that washes what as snow.
- **Therefore, There Are Two Ways Jesus Makes You Pure Right Now.** (1) Positional Purity – you are clean, unstained from guilt, before God by your faith in the sacrifice of Jesus. You might not feel pure. But positional purity is not about how you feel. It's about what the finished work on the cross does for you: It presents you before pure before God. (2) Conditional Purity – works much differently. Even though you are positionally pure and “clean” before God regarding your salvation and eternal future, you do sin. And conditional purity is about asking forgiveness when you do feel impure because of sin as a child of God. *“If we confess our sin, he is faithful and just to forgive us of our sin and cleanse us from all unrighteousness”* (1 John 1:9). It's conditional because we need to be continually cleansed every day, not for our salvation (positional purity took care of that). But for our hearts not to be condemned as we are walking with him in the freedom that he desires. (3) As a result, now we have another challenge to overcome: the challenge of how God goes about purifying our hearts

3. The Riddle of Purification

- **Villacarrillo, Spain:** (1) Is home to the world's largest olive press. It's capable of processing 2,500 tons of olives per day. (2) But the process for pressing olives hasn't changed for thousands of years. Olives are put on a press, and they are squeezed and squeezed until they produce oil, some of the purest of its kind. (2) The process for the Mr. Olive is painful. It's not fun going to the olive press and being recreated into something completely new. But for the Olive Oil Maker, it makes perfect sense. (3) The process by which God purifies our hearts also remains unchanged after thousands of years.
- **The Process of Heart Purification:** (1) He purifies by pressing: Paul said: *“We are hard pressed on every side; but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed”* (2 Cor 4:8-9). (2) He purifies by pruning – *“Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit”* (Jn 15:2). (3) He purifies by refining by fire: *“Behold, I have refined you, says the Lord, not as silver; I have refined you in the furnace of affliction”* (Is 48:10).
- **The Purposes:** (1) Unstained by guilt – The woman at the well lived with a guilty conscience. But after Jesus made her pure and refined her by the fire of his omniscience and telling her about every unscrupulous marriage she ever had, she became a great witness for his glory. (2) Without mixture – Gideon went from mixing faith in the Lord God and paganism to a mighty warrior when God pressed and pruned him courtesy of the threat of the Midianites. (3) Sincere – James, the brother of Jesus, went from a double minded man unstable in all his ways to a devoted follower of his Lord and brother after the resurrection.
- **The Goal:** For God's purification of our hearts is something we don't think about much but should. In fact, it's the reason for this beatitude. God purifies our hearts for the greatest goal possible: so that we are in a position to see God without perishing, both in this life and the one to come.

4. The Riddle of Seeing God

- **The Christian Song I'll Never Understand:** (1) “Open the eyes of my heart. I want to see you.” (2) There's a reason no one ever sang that in the OT: If you see God, you die. (3) Yet here Jesus says something truly revolutionary and unheard of: the pure in heart will see God. Consequently, the blessed of this beatitude – the pure in heart – are blessed for three reasons.
- **First, They Are Blessed By Seeing God Without Condemnation:** (1) The Greeks and Romans Were Eager to See the Face of God: that's why the “g”ods of the Greek/Roman pantheon had names and faces. Zeus, for example, looks like Arnold Schwarzenegger's body with Sam Shepherds face, and holds a lightning. They wanted to see the “g”od of thunder and lightning. (2) The Hebrews, However, We Afraid to See God: “You cannot see my face, Moses. For no one who sees me may live” (Ex 33:20). (3) Jesus says here, however, “with me and because of me, all of that is going to change for to see me is to see the Father without condemnation.”
- **Second, They Are Blessed By Seeing God in the Future:** (1) Everyone on the earth who has ever lived and will ever live will see God. It's going to happen. Those who never had their hearts purified by his blood will see him at the Great White Throne Judgment and be cast into a lake of fire prepared for the devil and his angels. (2) But for those who have had their hearts purified, Revelation promises them a different sight altogether: *“They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.”* (Rev 22:4-5).
- **Third, They Will See God Now:** (1) This beatitude is literal with regard to the future. But it's a metaphor with regard to the present. Much like “see what I mean?” (2) Thus, for you, right here and right now: (a) It's possible to see His Spirit moving in your circumstances. (b) It's possible to see His provident hand of provision in your everyday experiences. (c) It's possible to see Him by applying what Jesus said about a particular issue into your life. (d) It's possible to see Him by being on the blessed side of a miracle and an intervention of God. (e) And it's possible to see Him through the people he moves into your life and out of it. (f) And it's possible to see Him through the body of believers, the ecclesia of God. (2) Jesus said so: “blessed are the pure. For they shall see God.” Amen.