

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God

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Date: 01 November 2020

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[0 : 00] So we're going to read together from Ezekiel chapter 36. So Ezekiel chapter 36 speaks promise of the new covenant.

So I want to read this and see what it says about a pure heart here. And then we'll think about the Beatitudes. So in Ezekiel 36, verse 22, we're going to read to verse 32.

This is what God's word says. Therefore, say to the Israelites, this is what the sovereign Lord says. It is not for your sake, people of Israel, that I am going to do these things, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you have gone.

I will show the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, the name you have profaned among them. Then the nations will know that I am the Lord, declares the sovereign Lord, when I am proved holy through you before their eyes.

For I will take you out of the nations. I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you and you will be clean.

[1 : 11] I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you. I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.

And I will put my spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

Then you will live in the land I gave your ancestors. You will be my people and I will be your God.

I will save you from all your uncleanness. I will call for the corn and make it plentiful and will not bring famine upon you. I will increase the fruit of the trees and the crops of the field so that you will no longer suffer disgrace among the nations because of famine.

Then you will remember your evil ways and wicked deeds and you will loathe yourselves for your sins and detestable practices. I want you to know that I am not doing this for your sake, declares the Sovereign Lord.

Be ashamed and disgraced for your actions. Now, we are here in Beatitude number six.

[2 : 20] Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God. Purity and cleanness, generally something that we value, see it as a good thing, isn't it?

We think about it in the kitchen. We want to eat off dishes that are clean. In business dealings, we want there to be transparency and honesty.

If we think about the motives of a friend, we want them to be pure. So purity is something that we value. And Jesus here is saying to be pure in heart is a good thing.

It is blessed. But here's the thing. Sometimes we're thinking about this a little on Wednesday.

Sometimes because of the fear of man.

Sometimes of a desire to fit in. Sometimes because of the cost of being holy. Maybe we're not always so sure that being pure in heart is a good thing.

[3 : 24] Holiness can be seen negatively as holier than thou. Even within the church, we can sometimes belittle holiness.

We don't necessarily regard it in as high a way as Jesus does. And again, this beatitude certainly is a challenge to our culture.

Because if we think about what's the message that we hear about our heart and our core identity in the world today. It's a message, something along the lines of you be you.

Not be holy. Because I am holy. So we need to show today from the word of God, what is a pure heart?

How can I have one? And why is it a good thing? So we'll begin at the beginning. What is a pure heart? What does Jesus have in mind?

[4 : 25] What does the Bible teach? I think there are two aspects to this. First of all, the idea of inner moral purity. So this is why we read from Ezekiel 36.

And especially verses 25 to 27 there. In the promise of the new covenant, there is the idea of sprinkling and cleansing. Of God dealing with moral impurity, including dealing with false worship. This isn't some superficial clean-up operation. This is to the core washing. And that comes with a new heart being given.

A heart of flesh, not a heart of stone. A pure heart. And God putting his spirit within us. So that for the believer, we are transformed by the grace of God.

And the spirit is working in us at the level of our heart and our will towards obedience. Then we take it to the time of Jesus.

[5 : 29] And so much of the controversy that Jesus gets into with the Pharisees is over purity. Because the Pharisees had the idea of outward purity.

Whereas Jesus emphasised inward purity. They were all about rule righteousness. Whereas Jesus was concerned with heart righteousness.

They were about the letter of the law. Whereas Jesus wanted the heart and the spirit of the law to come through.

So to be pure in heart, according to Jesus, is to have a spiritual, an inner, a core purity.

Not just something external and superficial. But having a pure heart is also about the idea of having undivided loyalty.

[6 : 27] Soren Kierkegaard, the Danish Christian philosopher, said that purity in heart is to will one thing. So we began our time hearing from Psalm 24.

And the question was asked in those verses, verses 3 and 4. Who can enter? Who can stand in God's presence? And it was those who had clean hands and a pure heart.

And what did that pure heart look like? It looked like not trusting in idols. It looked like giving God first place. Not making vows to idols or other gods.

But rather having single-hearted loyalty to the Lord as the one true God. So purity in heart is about undivided loyalty to God.

That was from David. Again from David in Psalm 51. He returns to this idea. Psalm 51 verses 10 and 11. Say, create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

[7 : 33] Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. So this is after David's sin of adultery with Bathsheba and then having her husband murdered.

After God's judgment had come and after Nathan exposes David as the sinner. And here David prays, create a pure heart in me.

What does David want? David wants to be steadfast in his love and in his loyalty towards God. He doesn't want to surrender to sin anymore.

Rather, he wants to surrender to God's will. He does not want to lose God's presence or God's spirit with him.

So he wants a pure heart. So to be pure in heart then is to be sincere, is to be transparent, to have no mixed or hidden motives, to have loyalty towards God.

[8 : 33] Now back in the day, I think it was quite common for people to ask the question of one another. How is your heart? It's actually a really helpful question.

How is your heart right now in this season? Is it a pure heart? Soon, I am hoping to have an eye test because my glasses are getting really broken.

I don't know about you, but I love the technology that goes into an eye test. All the little games and things that you do to give a sense of how your eyes are getting. I also love the result as well.

Because the result is you get a lens and you get glasses that help your blurry vision. Well, here's a spiritual test for blurry vision to help examine our hearts.

God says, numerous occasions, be holy. Because I am holy. Think about our own heart. Do we find ourselves conforming to the standard and the spirit of the age?

[9 : 40] Do we find ourselves compromising because of the company that we're in? Do we find ourselves minimising sin or tolerating sin?

Are there in our experience what Gerry Bridges calls respectable sins? How we speak to and about others perhaps?

How we act? Are we guilty of greed or pride or lust or envy? God says, be holy. How are we doing with that?

God wants integrity. In so many ways, he says, I hate hypocrisy to be two-faced. But here's the truth, that we like to wear masks.

Either to live a double life. So we're sort of one way with our Christian circle. And then when we get to our colleagues or perhaps to the people that we share time with on campus, for example, we are another way entirely.

[10:44] So we wear a mask to live a double life. Or we can wear a mask to put on a religious show. To suggest that everything is fine. To suggest that we have all the answers.

To suggest that we have attained to a level of religious achievement. But God wants integrity in our hearts. Another test.

See how blurry our vision is. What's our motivation? The Psalms. David says, I want to enjoy being with God.

I am motivated by a desire to be near to him and to enjoy his presence. Jesus promised the Lord. They will see God. Is that our delight? Do we want to be in the presence of God?

To carve out time to enjoy being with him? Is fellowship with God something that we treasure? Or are we acting out of duty and formalism? Let's pray that God would examine us.

[11:52] That we would reflect on how our heart is. That we would have a sharper view to see that purity is good. That pursuing the glory of God should be our goal.

Now having asked what is a pure heart. It's important to ask then. How can I have a pure heart? And I imagine.

For most if not all of us. This is going to be something that's troubling and convicting. And maybe we're asking ourselves. Is it even possible? Or is it realistic? To say. Blessed are the pure in heart. In Proverbs chapter 20 and verse 9. The question is asked. Who can say. I have kept my heart pure. I am clean. And without sin.

The answer. Is not one of us. Martin Lloyd-Jones says. The only way to have a pure heart. Is to realise. You have an impure heart.

[12:56] Why is that? What does he mean by that? He means that recognising. Our impurity. Recognising our guilt. Our sin in this. Should direct us.

And drive us. To the only person. Who passes the test. The only one who always kept his heart pure. The only one who was always clean and without sin. Jesus alone. Who has that pure. Sinless heart. And who is the way. That we. Can see God. Think about Jesus. Think about his moral purity. We meet in Jesus.

Someone who is. Perfectly obedient. To the will of God. Not just. On the outside. But from his heart. We meet in Jesus. One who is motivated. By God's glory.

At all points in our life. We meet in Jesus. Someone who is surrounded by sin. But remained undefiled. Someone who is tempted by sin.

[13:51] But never fell. Think about Jesus. Undivided loyalty. What was it that motivated Jesus. And gave him joy. It was the Father's will. And the Father's work.

And the Father's glory. Especially in John's Gospel. We've been seeing that so often. Two places where we can see that. At the beginning of his ministry. We can think about the temptation. When the devil came to him.

When he was hungry. He was in the wilderness. Turned these stones into bread. Jesus said. Man should not live by bread alone. But by every word that comes from the mouth of God. Or when Satan tempts Jesus.

To buy down to him. To receive all the kingdoms. And all the glory. To have the glory. Without the suffering. Without the cross. Jesus said. Worship the Lord your God. And serve him only.

So from at the beginning of his public ministry. Concerned of undivided loyalty. Towards his father. And then at the Garden of Gethsemane. As Jesus was anticipating the cost.

[14:49] The dreadful call. Of taking to himself. The cup of God's wrath. Reserved for the enemies of God. Those who were sinful.

And rebellious. And unrepentant. And Jesus was going to drink that cup. To the dregs. In our place. So that we might be forgiven. And have eternal life.

That he was going to give his life. And as he faced that dreadful prospect. Still he prayed. Not my will. But yours. Be done.

To read of Jesus in the Gospels. Is to read of one who is truly pure. Truly holy. And whose life was truly beautiful. A patience like nobody else.

A kindness beyond measure. A mercy. And a love. That is breathtaking. So it's no wonder. That from the beginning.

[15 : 46] People were compelled. Towards Jesus. As Lord. And Saviour. Jesus has a pure heart. But how does that help us?

Well it's because Jesus alone. Can give you. And give me. That pure. And clean heart. That we need. To see and enjoy the presence of God.

And he does it. As a gift. He does it by his grace. We can use Psalm 24. As a picture. You know. Psalm 24. As who can ascend. The mountain of the Lord. Well.

Think about what Jesus does. Jesus comes down. The mountain of the Lord. Jesus leaves. The Father's side. Leaves the glory of heaven. To come and live among us. As a suffering servant. And he lived a perfectly pure life. While on earth. Here is Jesus. The one who has every right. To see and to enjoy. God his Father. And then we recognise him. In love.

[16 : 40] Going to the cross. And what happens there. At the cross. Is that he absorbs. Our moral impurity. Our stain. He is punished.

As if he were disloyal. If he were a hypocrite. And he dies. In the place. Of sinners. With the result. That by faith. You and I. Might be washed clean. We might be forgiven. We might get that new heart. That pure heart. We might have that.

New power. As the spirit comes to. Dwell in us. To fight remaining. Impurities. He gives us the privilege. To see. The glory.

Of God. How can I have a pure heart. Our only response. Is to ask the Lord Jesus.

[17 : 36] Wash me. From my guilt. And my sin. And my disloyalty. Renew. A right spirit within me. Give me a new desire. To live for your glory.

Give me an undivided heart. That would surrender. To his will. Rather than living. My way. Last question.

To ask. This evening. Why is a pure heart. A good thing. Why go against culture. In order to follow Jesus.

Why instead. Of listening to the message. Of follow your heart. We would follow. God's word. Not. Be true to yourself. But. Die to self. To live for Jesus. Why. Go down. That path. What's the reward. Blessed are the pure in heart.

[18 : 36] Jesus says. For they. Will. See. God. That's the reward. It's like David's desire. In the Psalms. To enjoy. God's presence.

To know. And enjoy. Relationship with him. Is. Our. Reward. Is the goal. Of faith. And this is also. How to pursue. A pure heart.

How are we going to avoid. Moral compromise. Divided loyalty. Being soft on sin. Ultimately. Our need is to get a vision. Of the glory of Jesus. That we would be transformed.

By that. Think. With me. About the efforts. That people go to. Perhaps. That we've gone to. In order to pursue. Pure beauty.

People will climb. A mountain. In the darkness. In order to see the beauty. Of a sunrise at dawn. People will cross continents.

[19 : 33] To discover beautiful. Architecture. Or landscapes. We will travel. Hours. And some of us. Will travel days. For the beautiful feeling.

Of being whole. We make effort. To pursue. Beauty. How much. Greater. Is God's beauty. God's glory.

And our calling. As the people of God. Is to invest ourselves. In seeing more of. Enjoying more of. The beauty. And the glory of Jesus. That we would engage ourselves.

In discovering more. Of him. Why? So that we would become. What we behold. The gospels. Are painting for us. A beautiful portrait. Of Jesus. The true image of God. The pure. The pure. Image of God. One with a pure heart.

[20 : 32] And with Christ's help. And with the spirit. In us. And as we see. More of Jesus. We are called to work. Towards. That kind of purity.

In. Our own. Lives. Just as we. Close up. One. Practical. Way. That we might go about this. Is to take the idea.

Of a snapshot. To carry around. You know. It's something that we do. For treasured memories. Isn't it? For people that we love. We take photos. Or we. We sometimes find ourselves.

Maybe sitting back. And thinking about. Meals that we enjoyed. With friends. Holidays that we went on. With our family. That kind of thing. Or. We scroll through photos.

On our phone. Because they. Bring us. To see. People. And events. That we. Cherish. This week.

[21 : 32] Why not. Take. A snapshot. Of Matthew. Chapter 5. Verse 8. Blessed are the pure in heart. For they will see God. Maybe you could have it.

As a screensaver. On your phone. Or. You could write it. In a journal. But. But to carry it around. With us. So that would be something. As it were. We. We'd pull out.

And. Reflect on. It's so easy. Isn't it? To be distracted. There's always the pull of our phone. The pull of our computer. Our TV. There's so many things going on. But to have those kind of snapshots.

From the word of God. That we can then reflect on. To. To keep giving us a concentrated. Vision. Of. The Lord Jesus. When we read.

Our Bibles. Through the week. Focus on an idea. Pray over it. Carry that. As a mental snapshot.

[22 : 26] Into the rest of our day. That when we're on the commute. Or. When we have. Time at lunchtime. We'd be able to. Reflect.

On. That. Snapshot. So that we'd be taking steps like that. To pursue. A pure heart.

Recognizing. The reward. Is great. I want to finish with. Words. From 1st John. Chapter 3.

Verse. 2 and 3. Where John writes. Dear friends. Now we are children of God. And what we will be. Has not yet been made known.

But we know that when Christ appears. We shall be like him. For we shall see him. As he is. All who have this hope in him. Purify themselves.

[23 : 22] Just as he is. Pure. Now we are seeing. As it were. Through a mirror. Darkly. But then. We will see.

God's glory. In the face of Jesus. Completely. We shall see him. We shall be made like him. And we shall enjoy him. Forever. Blessed are the pure in heart.

For they will. See God.