

Blessed are the pure in heart

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[0 : 00] We'll turn together to that chapter that we read, Matthew's Gospel, chapter 5. And I want us to focus particularly this evening on words that we find in verse 8.

One of the Beatitudes, the Beatitudes beginning, all of which are beginning with the word blessed.

And verse 8 says this, blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. There was a day, I suppose, when any preacher could say in Britain that these are the most famous words of Jesus.

I'm not sure anymore whether any of the words of Jesus are famous or not. I guess to some people they are, but to an increasing number of the population, they know nothing about Jesus.

This was made clear to me. I watched one of the Who Wants to Be a Millionaire program some months ago. And I saw a guy on there and he had got quite far.

[1 : 23] He had used up all his lifelines. And the question was put to him, I can't remember what it was, but it was a basic biblical question. Something that anyone would have known 50 years ago.

And he got it wrong. He lost a fortune by getting it wrong. And my sinful side said, it serves you right for not knowing your Bible. But that's the true, that's a true reflection of the kind of society and the kind of world we live.

That this generation has drifted away from the Bible and a whole generation has now grown up knowing very little, if anything, of the Bible. There was a day when everyone would have known these words, where they would have been put, I suppose, written on a poster or put on a framed picture on the wall.

The Beatitudes were precious to people. And of course, some people had a complete misunderstanding of them. And perhaps, if anything, it might even be in a kind of perverted way, a good thing that people have to come afresh to the Beatitudes.

Because if you come to them with an agenda, with your own mind made up, then you'll come to the conclusion that hundreds, thousands of people came to the same conclusion.

[2 : 46] That this is the way to be saved. That this is what God wants us to do. He wants us to be poor in spirit. He wants us, in order to be saved, to live a life which is dismal and mournful.

He wants us to live a life which is meek. And he wants us to live a life of hunger and thirst. And a life of mercy and pureness in heart.

And the mistake that people made in the past was that they believed that this was the way to heaven. And that if only we worked on our behavior and our lifestyle and our conduct, then, once you got it right, then you would have the kingdom of heaven.

You would be comforted. You would inherit the earth. You'd be sons of God. And so on. I don't think that a greater mistake was ever made in our understanding of Jesus.

Because anyone who reads those words with honesty and with openness in our minds, you will know, you will quickly discover, that it is impossible for you to achieve the description that Jesus makes of the kind of person who will belong to his kingdom, the kingdom of heaven.

[4 : 05] And it is impossible by ourselves, with the best will in the world, to change our own selves in order to conform to his description here.

We need to have God radically changing us in order to make us into new people. And it's only the new person, the new creation, the person who has been born again, who will fit the description, not because they worked for it or achieved it, but because that is the life that God has given them.

So the very first thing I want us to say this evening is that we must understand where those words appear. Those words are not the way to be saved by our own good efforts and good works.

Those words are a description of the person in whom God, in Jesus Christ, has changed and transformed and cleansed and in whom that God has brought to life through his spirit.

We need to come to God this evening and confess that we are bankrupt and dead and incapable of any of the description that he gives us here.

[5 : 20] And we need to ask him to create within us that new life and that new direction that he promises to give us. Nevertheless, those words, the words of Jesus, come straight to us in the world in which we live in.

Because is there anything more relevant to every generation than the word blessed? Let me tell you why. Because it simply means happy. And happiness is something that we would all like.

There isn't a single person in here tonight that doesn't want to be happy, that wants to seek. That's what we work for, isn't it? That's what we strive after. That's what we live for. I suppose our objective every day is to live each day in such a way that by the end of the day or throughout the day that we will be happy, that we will find some kind of pleasure in life.

We know that there are ups and downs. Life is very often like a roller coaster. And there are times which are more difficult than others. And yet, on average, we hope that our lives will be fun. And if they're not, then we will live for those times, like the weekend, for example, or our holidays, for example, or these main events in our lives that we focus and that we look forward to, like weddings and parties and all the rest of it, in which we will find that kind of sense of pleasure and happiness that we so long for.

There isn't a single person. There's no point in denying it. We're all like that. It's part of the world that we live in. And we long for happiness. And the more happiness we can get, the better. And if we can live out the lives, we all know that we're only going to live a few years in this life.

[6 : 54] If we can fill those years with happiness and make them as pleasant as possible, then that's the best we can make of it. And that's the objective that we ought to have.

There isn't a single person that would deny what I am saying. So when God comes to us, when Jesus comes to us, and he tells us, this is how to find happiness, he strikes a chord and draws our attention.

This is not something that we can ignore. It's not something that we even want to ignore. The least we can do is to listen to what Jesus says. Many people just reject it. They write it off and they say, well, I don't even know what it means.

It's some kind of mystical state in which Jesus talks about poor and spirit and those who mourn and being meek and all of these things. This is some kind of monastic state in which you cut yourself off from the real world.

Most people would say, well, I know where to find my happiness. I know that it's found in the kind of things that I find my happiness in. And so, but it's amazing, you know, how if you look at those words, if you look at those eight sayings, those eight beatitudes, each one of them beginning with the word happy, how each of them ends with something that we long for in order to achieve our happiness.

[8 : 19] Let's go through them. Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. That's the language of belonging, something belonging to you. And the world today wants to find happiness in belongings and things that belong to us.

God knows that. And he says, I can give you something that far exceeds anything that can belong to you on this earth. And he says, I can give you something that will give you the greatest ultimate happiness, the kind of happiness you'll never find by things belonging to you in this world.

But theirs is the kingdom of heaven. That's true happiness. And then he goes on to say, blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted. You can be the richest, most successful person in the whole world.

If you're troubled about something, if you can't sleep at night, if you have no comfort, no peace, then you're not happy. You can be a multimillionaire.

If you've got no peace, then you're not happy. God knows that. And he knows that your happiness comes through comfort. And the greatest comfort that God can give you, the one single source of our peace, of contentment that we long for as human beings, is what the Apostle Paul calls peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

[9 : 45] And you can be the most successful. You can be the most joyful. You can be the richest person in the world. And if you haven't got that peace, you have nothing.

Not a single thing. And then he goes on to say, blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. That's the language of the future, isn't it? And the future is something that we aim for and that we work for and that we provide for and that we hope for.

God says, I know. And this is what I can give you. I can give you a secure future. A future that's absolutely guaranteed. They will inherit the earth.

And the next one is satisfaction. Which one of us doesn't look for satisfaction? God says, I know. I know that your happiness is found in satisfaction. But I can give you something.

The kind of happiness. In all of these things, what God is saying to us is that the kind of happiness that I can give you is not something you can find in this world. Because what you take that momentary pleasure in in this world, it lasts only for a few moments.

[10 : 49] I'm sure. I'm sure that you do. It's possible to find happiness in this world. People say, well, money doesn't give you happiness.

I don't know where they get that idea from at all. Of course money gives you happiness. For a while. Of course money gives you a good feeling.

Of course there's a good feeling in being able to go out and buy what you want. Of course it is. For a while. It lasts only for a short while. And then once you lose, it's like the prodigal son.

Once he had spent everything, he became the most miserable man on earth because the source of his happiness disappeared with his money. And that's the way it is.

You either. So tonight God is saying to us, you're either going to live your life for what you can get and what you can achieve in this world. In which case it will all come to an end.

[11 : 46] Or you can invest. In what I can give you. Which will never end. And which will be yours. Forever.

And ever. That's the choice. That each one of us faces. This evening. Now here. And I suppose. The best way.

To go through this. Would be to start at the beginning. And to go through. Because there is a relation between each one of the beatitudes. But I just want to focus. On verse 8. And what Jesus says.

Here. Blessed he says. Are the pure in heart. For they shall see. God. Let's read it again. Blessed. Happy. Are the pure.

In heart. For they shall see. God. We're talking here. Of purity. Of cleanliness. Of hygiene.

[12 : 41] I don't need to tell you. That one of the main issues in today's world. Is an issue of hygiene. Anybody who's. Working in a kitchen. That serves the public. Has to have a food hygiene certificate.

You have to have a kitchen that's meticulous. You get government inspectors. Coming in. And inspecting your kitchen. And if. Unless you keep it to a certain standard. You're going to fail. You're not going to be able to serve the public anymore.

You can even be fined. If you don't have a kitchen. That comes up to the right standard. Every one of us. And some people. Of course. Maintain. I think. They've got some substance. That we live in an over sanitized world.

Where everything. We're obsessed. With being clean. And purifying. And cleansing. Every single thing. The same is true in a hospital. Of course. You have the MRSA scare. And you have to.

The standard of hospital cleanliness. Has to be absolutely right. In order to give the public confidence. So that when you come into the hospital. You know you're not going to catch. Catch this.

[13 : 35] So you're looking. As well as medical expertise. You're looking for a clean hospital. And if you think that's bad. You go try and. Try and. Work in a place. Where they make computer chips. I know this. Because that's the place I used to work in.

Before I went into the ministry. You look. You live. In a clean. You work in a clean environment. The whole room. Is absolutely spotless. Every single dust particle in the air.

Is taken out of that room. It's several times cleaner. Than an operating theater. And that's because. The circuits. That go to make up a computer. Are so tiny. They're so microscopic. That any dust particle.

Even the tiniest dust particle. Is like a meteorite. And it just comes. Crashing down on this circuit. And destroys it right away. So if you've got a few of these. You might as well go home. Because you're wasting your time. The environment.

Has to be absolutely clean. Everything. The air. Your clothes. Have to be dust free. You have to wear special gear. You have to go through. Special wind tunnels.

[14 : 31] With pure air. In order to take. Every particle off you. And such is. The necessity. Of being clean. But here.

God. Is also. Looking. For clean. For clean. For clean. For clean. For clean. For clean. For clean. Perfect. Spotless.

Purity. But it's not a purity. On the outside. It's a purity. On the inside. And he looks for it. In the one place.

That every one of us. Tonight. Has to confess. Is the last place. We want. Anyone. To get to see. Our hearts.

When the Bible. Talks about our hearts. It talks about that. Chamber. That little. That room. In. Inside of us. That nobody else.

[15 : 31] There are no doors. There are no windows. We are the only person. In that room. And in that room. You can do. What you want. Because you're going to.

You're never going to get caught. And your wife's never going to see you. Your husband's never going to see you. Your friends are never going to see you. Your colleagues are never going to see you.

You can think what you want. You can spend time in that room. You can outlive your fantasies. You can be as cruel as you want. To the people that you really don't like. In this world.

You can do anything you want. Because you know. That you're. And you have to admit. That that room exists. Don't you? And you spend time in that room. When you're on the bus.

And when you're. Falling asleep at night. And when you're in the classroom. And when you're working. And maybe you don't have something to focus on. And even when you do have something to focus on.

[16 : 26] Your mind. You go into that room. Every so often. Because you know. That that's where you're. The deepest recesses of your heart. Ah. And you know. That that room is.

A dirty place. It's a dark place. It's a place that you would hate. Anyone else to come. To see. And the trick of this.

Of this room is. The trick. Of living this life. Is separating the room. From your outside life. So that people. Never get to see. What lies in your heart.

That's what the Bible calls. Your heart. And every one of us. Has to confess. That if anyone had any clue. As to what goes on in our hearts. We would be. Filled with.

Incredibly. We would want to. Run a thousand miles. And get. Away. From anyone. That. Had any. Insight. Into what goes on.

[17 : 22] There. Some people. Have. An obsessive heart. An obsessive room. In which there's one. Particular issue. Maybe something.

That has grown. In your mind. And that something. Has become. An obsession. That you can't think. Of anything else. And every time. You go into that room. It's that one subject.

Or that one person. Or that one issue. That you think about. And it. You're getting a wee bit worried. Because it's beginning to affect. The way. You're living your life. It's beginning to affect.

Your concentration. And the way. That you give yourself. To your work. And to your family. And so on. Some people. Have a jealous heart. A heart. Where they. Where they.

Again. Have become obsessed. With what other people. Are doing. And what they are. In comparison. With other people. Somebody in your place of work. Has been promoted. Over you.

[18 : 14] And it's got to you. And it's affected. The way you think. And you're filled with bitterness. And hatred. For that other person. Some people. Have a conceited heart. They look at other people.

In terms. Of comparing them. With you. And you have a. Superiority. Complex. Over them. You're critical. Of them. You look upon them.

With disdain. And with disgust. And secretly. Oh. You're polite to them. At the time. On the outside. You treat them. Oh. How are you doing? All right. Yes. Oh. It's good to see you.

And yet. You have this bitterness. Inside. For everyone. Everyone. That doesn't match up. To the kind of person. That you happen to like. Who isn't a threat. To you.

Some people. Have a lustful heart. And with most people. It's a combination. Of every disgusting stuff. That you can think of. And that you give yourself to.

[19 : 07] And somebody. Somebody will say. Well you can't help. What you think about. In a sense. That's true. Nobody can help. A thought. Coming into your heart. But come on.

You know perfectly well. That we're not talking about. The occasional thought. We're talking about. The fact that. You. Have given yourself. To these thoughts.

And it's got worse. Over the years. To the point. Where you know. That it shouldn't be. As it is. But you don't know. What to do about it. And actually.

You don't even know. If you want to do. Anything about it. You're. Pretty sure. That you don't. Want to do. Anything about it. It's a bit like. If I can use the example.

Of a teenager's bedroom. I've had the experience. Now of six. And with one or two. Exceptions. A teenager's bedroom. Is a. Is a. Is an example. Of human psychology.

[20 : 05] You go in there. And you talk to a teenager. And he'll tell you. I don't like my room. Being in the state. It's in. But I don't know. What to do about it. And I don't know.

If I want to do. Anything about it. And as soon as you do. Something about it. Within a few moments. It's back to what it was. In the first place. That's what our hearts are. You know.

That I'm telling the truth. Don't you? You don't need to. Nod. You don't need to. Agree with me. Openly. But you know. In your heart of hearts.

That that's the way. Our hearts are. And the thought. Of God. Being able to see. And that's really. The issue. Isn't it? With God. With you and God. There I can.

I suppose. There are two issues. First of all. The fact that God. Knows. All the stuff. That goes on. But then. The fact is. Also. That we really.

[20 : 59] Don't want him. To do anything. About it. We're quite happy. The way. We are. The reason. You haven't. Come to him. And you haven't.

Asked him. To change your life. Is because. You don't really know. If you want him. To change your life. That's the nature. Of sin. Sin. Is pleasant. It's attractive.

Sin. Has a. Compelling. Power. That holds you. Where you are. You know. That it's wrong. You know. That you're steeped in it. You don't know.

What to do. And you don't know. If you want to do. Anything about it. And that's why today. That you need to come to God. And ask him. To show you. How much. You need. His salvation.

And what he can do. For you. Now perhaps you've noticed this. As we've been speaking. But. Perhaps you've asked this question. Well why. If it's so impossible.

[21 : 54] To change the way. That my heart is. And if. We're all. In the same position. Tonight. That we all. Have hearts. That are. That are corrupt.

And deceitful. And filthy. Then why is it. What purpose. Does Jesus have. In saying this. Blessed are the pure. In heart.

If it's impossible. For me to have. A pure heart. Why is Jesus. Saying it. And I guess. That's the most crucial. Question of all.

And the answer is simple. Because. Jesus. Came into the world. To resolve. The very problem. That I've just. Described. That was the world. He came into.

But unless. We realize. What the problem is. And unless. We're confronted. With a problem. The problem. That lies. In every single. One of us. That we all. Have hearts.

[22 : 47] That don't. Want to know God. That want to rebel. Against God. We want to do. The very opposite. To what God. Tells us. And live. The very opposite. To the way. That God tells us.

To live. And unless. God shows us. The state. Of our hearts. And that's why. Jesus came into the world. To bring. God's cleansing. And forgiveness. To each one of us.

By laying down. His life. At Calvary. So that. By his sacrifice. On the cross. God. Could work. Within us. And good. God could bring about.

That change. That every one of us. Needs. God says to us. Tonight. That I can give you. That clean heart. I am willing.

And I am able. To do it. That's the message. That Jesus. Brought to the people. Who were around him. At the time. His disciples. And the people who lived.

[23 : 41] People who he preached to. That he asked. And when he commanded them. To come to me. All you who are weary. And heavy laden. And burdened. That's what he meant. That he could give them.

The rest. And that blessedness. That only he. Could bring them to. So what is. A pure heart. What does it mean. To have.

A pure heart. Well it means. First of all. A new heart. A heart that only God. Can create. When God. When. When Jesus talks about.

A pure and pure in heart. He's not implying. That it's possible. For us to. For. In any way. To perform. A cleansing operation. In the heart. That we have. What David said.

Is absolutely through. Lord. Create within me. Create within me. A clean heart. And renew. A right spirit. Within me. So a pure heart.

[24 : 35] Is a heart. That God. Will create. In you. And I hope. That you. You've come to the conclusion. By now. That it is utterly impossible. To. By your own.

Attempts. By your own. Improvements. To clean. Your own heart. But the Bible. Says a lot more. About the heart. That God creates. Within us.

Than the fact. That it's pure. It tells us. That it is a. Devoted heart. As well. In Psalm 86. The psalmist. Pays this. Teach me your way.

O Lord. That I may walk. In your truth. Unite my heart. To fear. Your name. And what that means. Is that he's asking God. For a heart.

Which is focused. A mind. And a will. That is focused. On doing. On knowing God. And doing. God's will. A heart. Which is consecrated.

[25 : 30] To God. And there's no way. That anyone's heart. Is going to be turned. Towards God. Unless. It's been open. To see. And to discover. Who God is.

And how marvelous. God is. We'll never see that. Until we see. How sinful. We are. And until God. Removes. And takes away. The sin. That is in.

Our hearts. So a heart. So God can create. Within us. A pure heart. And a heart. That's focused. On him. But he also. Can create. A transparent heart.

One which. One which. No longer. I hope. Keeps the outside. From the inside. In which we. Our whole. Being. Becomes. Transparent.

I remember once. When the kids. Were younger. Going into a shop. And I saw. A plastic. Working heart. Heart. I was one of these.

[26 : 26] Educational shops. And I bought the thing. And we made it up. And we were able to see. How. A heart. Worked. You can only do that. With a plastic heart.

One which you can. Which you can see. Into the inside. And I believe that. The work that God does. In a person's. Life. It means that that person.

Becomes much more. Transparent. To the outside world. To the people. That he knows. To his family. To his friends. And all of a sudden. What is on the inside.

What you see. In other words. What you see. Is what you get. And what's on the inside. Is what's on the outside. And there's no longer. Any reason. To hide.

Once a person. Becomes. Becomes bankrupt. When he discovers. His own bankruptcy. And shame. And he comes. Comes to the Lord. Every person. That comes to the Lord.

[27 : 21] And asks the Lord. To change him. Has admitted. His own bankruptcy. Well there's nothing more. To admit. Is there? Once you admit. You're dead. And trespasses. And sins. Once you admit.

You're. You're. You're. You're a hopeless sinner. Well there's nothing much more. Is there? And you go on living. Like that. The Christian life. Ought to be an honest. And a transparent life.

One in which. There is no pretense. And no deception. And no hiding. And the heart that God creates in us.

Is a receptive heart as well. A heart that will come to God's word. And receive. Every time God speaks to us. In his word. We want to listen. We want to hear.

What God. The Lord. Will say. To us. And that's the motivation. That each one of us has. Who loves. And who serves. Jesus.

[28 : 14] The promise that Jesus gives. In this verse though. Is that those who are pure in heart. Will see. God. Will see.

God. What does that mean? There's a sense. In which. We can see God. In this life. By understanding him. And by perceiving. That God is present with us.

Every single moment. Of our lives. There's a sense in which. Every Christian. Ought to live every day. Seeing God. Even although he's. Invisible. He can see him.

By faith. He's able to perceive. That God is there. Not only that God is there. I suppose everyone here. Who believes in God. Knows that he's there. But a Christian. Is able to say. God is on my side.

If God is for us. Who can be against us? And so he goes into. Every situation. With God. With God's companionship. His company. And his presence. With us. It's one of the greatest.

[29 : 10] Discoveries. A person can make. To know. That whatever I face. In this life. Whatever challenges. And difficulties. And perplexities. And frustrations. And stresses. In this life.

I'm never alone. But then I go into them. With God. I suppose that's. A bit like. Elisha. And his servant. When they were surrounded.

By Syrians. And when. The servant. Looked out the window. And he saw the Syrian army. Thousands of Syrian chariots. And Elisha.

He knew all about. The threat. That there was. He knew. That he was. Life was in danger. And if the Syrians. Got their way. That they would. Put him to death. But he also knew. That there were angels.

Surrounding him. That God was with him. And so his prayer was. Lord. Open the eyes. Of my servant. When his eyes were opened. He saw. The chariots. And the horsemen.

[30 : 05] The angels. Of God. Surrounding him. The angel of the Lord. Encaps. And round. Encompasses. All those about. That do him fear. And them deliver us. Do you have that truth?

Do you have that assurance? In your own life. And in your own heart. Tonight. Do you know what that means? Only a person. Who has come to the Lord. In faith. Can know. That great promise.

Well that's one way. Of seeing God. We can see God. In a sense. In this life. By knowing him. And by knowing. That he. Is there. We perceive him. Who is invisible.

But. Jesus promise. Of course. Also extends. Into the future. And to that great. Fulfillment. That God promises. One day. For all those. Who love Jesus. That they will go.

To be with God. Forever. Where. They will see. His face. And his name. Will be on their foreheads. And God will wipe away.

[31 : 00] Every tear. From their eye. They will see. His face. Jesus. That was when. That was. A bit like. Peter and John.

When they went up to. The mount of transfiguration. With Jesus. Remember that time. When Jesus transformed. That ordinary. Piece of ground. Into heaven itself. Where Jesus was.

Transfigured. Before them. And they. Saw something. That they had never seen. Before. The glory. Of Jesus Christ. Breaking through. His human nature. And his human body.

And they were able. To see something. They would never see again. Until. That time. They got a taste. Of heaven. Remember the reaction. That. Remember the effect. It had on Peter.

Peter wanted to stay there. Time for him. Stood still. He didn't want to go. Back down to. Where he had been before. For him. If Jesus had told him. I want you to stay here. For the rest of your life.

[31 : 53] He would have been happy. That's what he wanted. And that's a picture. Of. The. The utter. Satisfaction. That there is. And the utter.

Pleasure. That there is. And the joy. That there is. Within. Heaven. Itself. Where they see. The presence. And the face. Of Jesus.

Who loved them. And gave himself. For them. Heaven. Heaven is a place. Where time. Stands still. Where nine. Billion. Years.

From when. It. From when we. When we started. Our. Our. Dwelling. In heaven. We will feel. Exactly. The same. As we felt. At the very beginning. Time.

Will stand still. And for those. Who. Gaze. At the face. Every moment. Will be a new moment. And every moment. Will be one. In which.

[32 : 50] The life. As we knew it. Will have faded. Into a distance. A distance. Memory. Nothing. Can compare. With what God. Has promised.

For his people. Isn't that. The greatest promise. That you can have. Isn't that. What you really. Want. In this world. And beyond the world.

Do you not want. To know God. And to have. That forgiveness. That new heart. That Jesus. Can give us. Through his death. And resurrection. Do you not want. To have that promise. That.

Your life. Is renewed. And transformed. By Jesus. Do you not want. To have that purpose. Of serving. And loving. And knowing God. As your savior.

Well. Tonight. Jesus. Can give you. A new heart. He can take out. The heart. Of dirt. And filth. And grime.

[33 : 45] And he can replace it. With. His own creation. One that will love him. And serve him. And know him. And one in which.

We will know. The joy. That we will never find. In. This world. Let's pray. Our father in heaven.

Once again. We come. And we. We pray to submit ourselves. To your word. And we ask. That you will. That you will. Impress. These words. Upon us. And open up.

Our hearts. We pray. So that we may know. The operation. The surgeon. The physician. Taking away. All that is. Unclean. And all that is.

Deceitful. And replacing it. With your own. Creation. With the heart. That you want to give us. This evening. Lord we pray. That by faith. We will.

[34 : 39] Each one of us. Ask. So that we will. Receive. In Jesus name. Amen. Amen.