

**The Rock: 05-15-2022**

**A year with the master**

**Title**: Blessed are the pure in heart

**Scripture**: Matthew 5:8 / 1 Peter 1:13-25

(black bible Pg. ESV)

**Theme**:

To be pure in heart means to guard your heart, your life and focus in the right direction, being filled the Holy Spirit.

**Introduction**:

Peter, in his first letter to the Church at large, challenged them to work on being holy. Making sure they are doing what they know is right, and standing in that place where God the Father is honored.

He is purposeful in doing this, as the gift of Jesus and His salvation ought to drive us to be better than we were yesterday. Not better than the next person you see, but simply better than you were yesterday.

**-1 Peter 1:22-25 (ESV)**

"Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere

brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; for

"All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever." And this word is the good news that was preached to you."

It is the good news that was preached to you! The gospel of Jesus. And it seems one of the things Peter learned over his lifetime, was a sense of humility and the ability to guard his heart against boastfulness, pride and trying to stand on his own.

So, we return again to the beatitudes with that in mind, where Jesus continues to build on the one prior until we find ourselves looking to the very heart of God for His people.

Jesus started, as you may remember, with an emptying statement. Blessed are the poor in spirit. As if to say, "If you would come to me, you really need to leave everything else behind."

We are called to do that, not to become a different person, but to become who God made us to be from the beginning.

We mourn, not just the loss of others, but ourselves and our mistakes. Why? Because God brings conviction and comfort to us when we grieve His heart.

He helps us and brings us that comfort in any situation if we recognize ourselves before Him.

Learning too, the meekness of Christ and how to hunger and thirst after His righteousness. A longing for God more than anything else in life.

And yet, when we do that, when we learn that, we find that life is a joy, it is brighter and more fulfilling not because circumstances change, but because we are centered in Christ.

Things don't seem as tedious and hard, because we are being filled, we are satisfied.

Learning to be merciful, each one, again, building on the one before. We cannot get to a place of mercy triumphing over judgement, without learning everything else.

We have to know what it means to be poor in spirit. We have to know what it is to

mourn, to be meek in a world that demands power at all cost. We must learn what it means to hunger and thirst after Him.

As with anything else in life, living and being a Christian is not a "one and done" thing, and then we are set for life. That is not what Jesus taught His followers, and not what Peter brings out in his letter to the Church at large.

It is a life time process, where we have been saved, we will be saved, and at the moment we are being saved.

(Sanctification) Saved from what?

We have been saved from sin's penalty. We will be saved ultimately from sin's presence. Right now, however, we are being saved from sins power in our lives. That is a daily battle we face, that is why the beatitudes and what Peter tells us is so important.

### **The Story:**

Learning this helps us all to recognize that God is always working with us and in us every day doing two things:

#### **-Romans 8:29 (ESV)**

"For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers."

**-Philippians 2:12-13 (ESV)**

"Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure."

Every single one of us is a work in progress. Every single one of us celebrates victories, struggles with defeats and all the while, we ought to be growing in Christ as we work out our salvation.

Thinking on this verse in Matthew, this "pure in heart" piece placed almost right in the middle of this list, I remembered back to when my Lisa used to cross-stitch. She made me a book mark for my Bible -on it was this verse:

**-Matthew 5:8 (ESV)**

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

I have it in one of my many Bibles and faded as it is, it serves as a reminder to me of her love for me and perhaps her encouragement as my wife of what I should be looking toward.

Because, the older I get, the more I come to realize that this is far harder than you would think. At 54, I often pray and wrestle with the fact that I'd like to think I am farther along in my Christian journey than I am.

Some things you would have thought you perhaps would have mastered or at least gotten a better handle on; you find the moment you let your guard down -well you find very quickly that you are in a place you know you shouldn't be.

The Scriptures are clear on a few things when it comes to our hearts. Starting with the painful and negative aspects of it.

Jeremiah the prophet makes this very painful and haunting statement:

**-Jeremiah 17:9 (ESV)**

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?"

Jesus reinforces this when he is talking once again to His good friends, the pharisees:

**-Matthew 12:33-34 (ESV)**

"Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit

bad, for the tree is known by its fruit. You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks."

Left alone, one would have to wonder, how on earth could any of us ever have a pure heart? How will we ever see God?

Jeremiah didn't stop at verse 9, thankfully, as he shows the heart of God to us in what he writes next:

**-Jeremiah 17:10 (ESV)**

"I the Lord search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds."

Solomon as well in Proverbs challenges us in a great verse that reminds us; we have work to do in our growth as Christians:

**-Proverbs 4:23 (ESV)**

"Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life."

Eugene Peterson in The Message puts it like this:

"Keep vigilant watch over your heart; that's where life starts."

The NIV, where I cut my teeth and did most of my memorization, puts it this way:

"Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it."

We need everything Jesus has taught us so far if we are going to continue to grow in Him. I don't say that to be some sort of major downer, trying to make anyone feel bad. As though we are in a hopeless situation.

It is just, if we want to make progress in our Christian walk, to be healed of the brokenness and pain, to identify the sin in our lives, to understand the Father's heart, we have to be prepared to admit where our heart is at without Christ.

God does not leave us on our own, and if we would recognize this, we will find that He is at work in us all the time. Regardless of how we are feeling. We just have to learn to do something with what He is showing us, and that transforms the heart.

But that's the struggle, isn't it? As human beings we have an inability, or perhaps a lack of desire to recognize our need.

And within that, to recognize that God wants to meet all of our needs:

**-Philippians 4:19 (ESV)**

"And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus."

The context in which Paul writes this is from a prison cell, struggling with the if and when he will be released. Yet, he is still joyful in his heart, because he knows -God is for him.

The heart is a crazy thing. I mean it's the most vital organ we've got, right? We need to keep it healthy and pumping in order for that life-giving blood to move through our bodies.

If the heart stops, well, not much else is going to happen. Yet, the Bible talks of the heart as the emotional wheel-house of our life as well. The center of our personality, actually.

Guard it! Because if you don't, it will lead you astray. Or, if you are guarding it, it will lead you home.

Not for nothing, but I remember the first time I saw Lisa. She was coming out of the theater area at MVU and heading toward the front office area.

As a young 17-year-old, who had just moved from MA, I was not looking for a relationship for many, and various reasons. Yet, my heart told my head, as it were, "You have got to find out who she is."

I can't explain that, except to say, that I just somehow knew she was the one. Why? Because it seems, my heart knew. In God's goodness I've been blessed ever since.

Now, that doesn't mean the last 35-36 years has been a glide. Anyone who knows me at all will tell you I am a difficult person to get along with at times.

Yet, in the tender affections, the patience, the grace of my Lisa has helped me along through the years. That is the beauty of marriage, isn't it?

As an aside- but not really-as we look to understand the pure in heart piece, this matter of the heart, marriage is given to us as the physical expression / outworking of our relationship with Jesus.

We are the bride of Christ; we belong to Him and no other. Why? Because we are the object of His affections. We have captured His heart. How do I know that? The cross, that's how.

The pure in heart will see God- Ephesians 5 is so profound in this -when we look at the marriage piece, we get so hung up on submit, and then from there exactly what is my role and how am I to do it.

But Paul tells us that it is a mystery! Any of you who have been married for any length of time, know this. Paul, however, is thinking along a different line:

**-Ephesians 5:32-33 (ESV)**

"This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband."

Marriage is really the revelation of the relationship Jesus has with His bride, (His Church). We have captured His heart and are the object of His affection.

Therefore, guard your heart, it belongs to Him who loves you. Recognize that your heart is the center of your emotions and your feelings, your personality.

My brain logically will tell you Lisa was pretty, and she was nice and therefore I wanted to get to know her. But what's up with my heart? It starts in the brain, but it can never just end there. Something inside though, just knew.

A couple of helpful quotes again this morning regarding this. Lloyd-Jones:

"We have to remind ourselves again that the Christian faith is ultimately not only a matter of doctrine and understanding or of our intellect, it is a condition of the heart."

**-Studies in the Sermon on the Mount -  
Pg.93**

"...Why is it He puts the emphasis upon the heart rather than upon externalities and conduct? The pharisee, you will remember, were always ready to reduce the way of life and righteousness to a mere matter of conduct, ethics and behavior. How the gospel finds us all out!... Be careful! For Christianity is also not primarily a matter of conduct and external behavior. It starts with the question: 'What is the state of the heart?'"

**-Studies in the Sermon on the Mount -  
Pg.93**

Jesus feels this way about you, and He desires a pure heart in each of us that seeks Him as the object of our affection.

Because from that comes everything else. Our behavior, our understanding of the Scriptures and how we live our lives, and most importantly, how and where we see God in it all.

Pure in heart. Is it possible? Absolutely it is. But the sum total of what Jesus is teaching here, needs to be working out in our lives, as much as it depends on us.

None of this will just happen. Any more than a marriage will just be successful with no effort. Too many of us struggle because we fail to see our need, and in that, we miss God's provision for that need.

The Holy Spirit of God is our helper. We then, have the opportunity and ability to choose to listen, to follow, and to change. That's our responsibility in the maturing of our relationship with Jesus.

I can hear Jesus in the beatitudes, if not pleading, at least strongly encouraging the crowd, "Come to me! I want is best for you, and the Holy Spirit is your helper."

Coming to our Bible, reading it the way in which it is intended to be read, in the way we are called to, as a mirror to our soul.

Left to ourselves, we come up short, all the time. We have to recognize that! Painful as it seems at times, to see that we are poor in spirit allows us to then be rich in all that follows here in this list!

Jesus doesn't come up short, and He is offering, He has offered Himself up for us. Everything we need is found in Christ.

How can I become pure in heart? Recognize the Gospel! That we are broken and sinful people, but that Jesus Christ has stepped in and done what we could not do.

The innocent took the penalty of the guilty, in order that the guilty would receive the gift of the innocent.

The gospel is the light that shines on the path which leads us out of the pit and the darkness of the world and raises us up to the heavens where the pure in heart see God.

(Pray)