

ST. ARMANDS KEY LUTHERAN CHURCH

SARASOTA, FLORIDA

STUDY NOTES FOR SAKLC CONVERSATIONS ON THE BEATITUDES OF JESUS

MARCH 3, 2016

“THE BLESSEDNESS OF PURITY”

(Matthew 5:8)

[SEVERAL COMPARATIVE TRANSLATIONS]

(GREEK) - μακάριοι οἱ καθαροὶ τῆ καρδίᾳ, ὅτι αὐτοὶ τὸν θεὸν ὄψονται.

(NRSV) - *“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.”*

(GNT) - *“Happy are the pure in heart; they will see God!”*

(CE) - *“Happy are people who have pure hearts, because they will see God.”*

(MSG) - *“You’re blessed when you get your inside world—your mind and heart—put right. Then you can see God in the outside world.”*

(AMP) - *“Blessed [anticipating God’s presence, spiritually mature] are the pure in heart [those with integrity, moral courage, and godly character], for they will see God.”*

SHARE GOD’S PEACE WITH OTHERS then DISCUSS!

1. What comes to mind when you hear the word **PURITY**?
2. Do you think that your definition of **PURITY** is biblical?
3. What do you think is the biblical definition for **PURITY**?
4. What does the **HEART** have to do with **PURITY**?

INTRODUCTION TO TODAY'S SESSION:

1. Note, once again, that the Beatitudes are given in a very logical order –
 - a) The first three Beatitudes concerned our spiritual needs and our attitude towards the Kingdom of God.
 - b) Then, we hunger and thirst after righteousness.
 - c) Then we become merciful, pure in heart and peacemakers.
2. One biblical commentator has suggested that three Beatitudes lead us up a mountain; the fourth Beatitude reaches the summit; the last three Beatitudes lead us down.
3. This Beatitude holds out the great promise of allowing us to “*see God.*”
4. To become pure in heart we need to see God as the special gift that we receive for cooperating with His work. In simple economic terms, purity has a *huge payoff* both in this life and in the life to come.
5. A passion for purity is not innate in human beings, but a desire for satisfaction and happiness is. Jesus calls us to a purity of heart that brings us the greatest of all joys: a vision of God Himself!

A) What Is The Heart?

1. This Beatitude does not refer to freedom from impurity in our lives, but to a heart that has been enlightened by the gospel of Christ. (cf. Eph1:18 – “*so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints.*”)
2. “**Heart**” translates *kardia*, from which we get cardiac and similar terms. Throughout Scripture, as well as in many languages and cultures throughout the world, the heart is used metaphorically to represent the inner person, the seat of motives and attitudes, and the center of one’s personality. But in Scripture it represents much more than emotion and feelings. It also includes the thinking process and particularly the will.... The heart is the control center of mind and will as well as emotion.
3. The gospel emphasizes the importance of a good heart in order for us to be acceptable to God. (Romans 1:21 – “*for though they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their senseless minds were darkened.*”) also see (Romans 2:5 – “*But by your hard and impenitent heart you are*

storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath, when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.")

4. We speak *"out of the abundance of the heart"* (Matt. 12:34 – ***"You brood of vipers! How can you speak good things, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks."***)

5. The Pharisees appeared clean on the outside, but inwardly were "full of hypocrisy and lawlessness" (Matt 23:23-28 - ***"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint, dill, and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. It is these you ought to have practiced without neglecting the others. ²⁴ You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel! ²⁵ "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. ²⁶ You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup, so that the outside also may become clean. ²⁷ "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which on the outside look beautiful, but inside they are full of the bones of the dead and of all kinds of filth. ²⁸ So you also on the outside look righteous to others, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness."***)

6. Christianity starts with a condition of the heart:
 - a) Some people have a *"mechanical interest"* in the Bible – they are *"always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth"* (see 2 Tim. 3:7 – ***"who are always being instructed and can never arrive at a knowledge of the truth."***)

 - b) Christ starts at the heart, and when He gets that he gets the rest of you, too!

B) WHAT IS PURITY?

1. Jesus is speaking about our heart, the seat of our emotions and our entire inner being – then He tells us that this heart must be pure.

2. **"Pure"** translates *katharos*, a form of the word from which we get catharsis. The basic meaning is to make pure by cleansing from dirt, filth, and contamination. Catharsis is a term used in psychology and counseling for a cleansing of the mind or emotions.

3. Pure in heart should not be restricted to moral, still less sexual purity. It denotes one who loves God with all his/her heart (see Deut. 6:5 – ***"You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might."***). It denotes one with an undivided loyalty, and whose inward nature corresponds with his outward profession (see

Isa. 29:13 – ***“The Lord said: Because these people draw near with their mouths and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and their worship of me is a human commandment learned by rote.”*** Such is the generation of those that seek God (Ps. 24:6 – ***“Such is the company of those who seek him, who seek the face of the God of Jacob.”***)

4. The term Matthew used here means **pure** or clean. It can be used literally of physical cleanliness, but Scripture often uses it for moral cleanliness or purity. A simple but helpful way of looking at the word is to realize that it implies the absence of impurity or filth. It implies a singleness of purpose, without distraction (*akin to the concept of holiness, being set apart for a special purpose*. See James 4:8 – ***“Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.”***) Any distracting or corrupting influence that one allows into his/her heart makes that person less effective as a servant.
5. At Jesus’ time, Judaism had developed a complex system of laws for maintaining ceremonial purification, which later comprised *Tohoroth* (“Cleannesses”) one of the divisions of the ***Jewish Mishnah***. But all of those laws could bypass the most important purity of all, purity of heart. A pure heart produces external purity, not vice versa. A pure heart describes a person whose single-minded loyalty to God has affected every area of life.
6. God has always demanded (*W*)holiness from His people (see Deut. 14:2 – ***“For you are a people holy to the LORD your God; it is you the LORD has chosen out of all the peoples on earth to be his people, his treasured possession.”***)
 - a) A pure heart allows us to “ascend into the hill of the Lord” (see Ps. 24:3-4 – ***“Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place? ⁴Those who have clean hands and pure hearts, who do not lift up their souls to what is false, and do not swear deceitfully.”***)
 - b) We cannot see the Lord without it (see Hebrews 12:14 – ***“Pursue peace with everyone, and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.”***)
 - c) The purpose of Christian preaching is to instill “love from a pure heart” (see 1 Tim. 1:5 – ***“But the aim of such instruction is love that comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and sincere faith.”***)

-FOR SMALL GROUP EXPLORATION-

DAVID'S PERSONAL ACCOUNT AS HE STRUGGLED FOR PURITY OF HEART

1. Read the following passages

Psalm 139:23-24 – *“Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. ²⁴See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”*

Psalm 51:10 – *“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.”*

Psalm 19:12-13 – *“But who can detect their errors? Clear me from hidden faults. ¹³Keep back your servant also from the insolent; do not let them have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression.”*

2. What was David's attitude toward his own heart? What did he pray for according to these verses?

3. What – specifically - did he pray about his own sin?

4. Which statement below best conveys David's attitude:

- a) *Sometimes I don't even know when I'm sinning. I need to be aware of that and ask God to remind me.*
- b) *I know right from wrong. It's just a matter of doing it.*
- c) *Purity is simply a matter of discipline.*
- d) *Even when I ask God for help, I fail.*

5. How do we/you guard our own hearts?

C) WHEN WILL WE SEE GOD?

1. In one sense, we see God right now, so the promise is partially fulfilled.

a) We see God in nature:

- David saw the evidence of God in nature (see Ps. 19:1-3 – *“The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork. ²Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge. ³There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard.”*)

- The universe around us continues to provide evidence of God’s handiwork and proclaim His power (Rom. 1:20 – ***“Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made. So they are without excuse.”***)
- The hymn, *This Is My Father’s World*, reminds us - ***“The morning light, the lily white, declare their Maker’s praise.”***

b) We see God in history:

- Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 2:37-38 – ***“You, O king, the king of kings—to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, the might, and the glory, ³⁸ into whose hand he has given human beings, wherever they live, the wild animals of the field, and the birds of the air, and whom he has established as ruler over them all—you are the head of gold.”***)
- The Roman Empire (Mark 1:15 – ***“and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.”***)
- The destruction of Jerusalem (Matthew 24:1-35)

c) We see God through the eye of faith – like Moses who *“endured as seeing Him who is invisible”* (Hebrews 11:27 – ***“By faith he left Egypt, unafraid of the king’s anger; for he persevered as though he saw him who is invisible.”***)

d) The child of God sees His presence everywhere and experiences the joy of God’s watchful eye over them (Ps. 139:7-12 –

***“Where can I go from your spirit?
Or where can I flee from your presence?
⁸ If I ascend to heaven, you are there;
if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.
⁹ If I take the wings of the morning
and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,
¹⁰ even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand shall hold me fast.
¹¹ If I say, “Surely the darkness shall cover me,
and the light around me become night,”
¹² even the darkness is not dark to you;***

*the night is as bright as the day,
for darkness is as light to you.”)*

- e) William Barclay, the British cleric and biblical scholar, in his commentary on The Gospel of Matthew, writes this: *“If the ordinary person goes out on a night of stars, he sees only a host of pinpoints of light in the sky; he sees what he is fit to see. But in the same sky the astronomer will call the stars and the planets by their names, and will move amongst them as his friends; and from that same sky the navigator could find the means to bring his ship across the trackless seas to the desired haven. The ordinary person can walk along a country road, and see by the hedgerows nothing but a tangle of weeds and wild flowers and grasses. The trained botanist would see this and that, and call it by name and know its use; and he might even see something of infinite value and rarity because he had eyes to see. Put two men into a room filled with ancient pictures. A man with no knowledge and no skill could not tell an old master from a worthless daub, whereas a trained art critic might well discern a picture worth thousands of pounds in a collection which someone else might dismiss as junk ... In every picture of life we see what we are able to see. So, says Jesus, it is only the pure in heart who shall see God.”*
2. In the final sense, we will see God in heaven (Rev. 22:3-4 –*“Nothing accursed will be found there any more. But the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him; ⁴ they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.”*)
- (1 John 3:2 – *“Beloved, we are God’s children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is.”*)
 - (Psalms 17:15 – *“As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness; when I awake I shall be satisfied, beholding your likeness.”*)

D) CONCLUSIONS:

1. This Beatitude serves as Jesus’ command to live right! Jesus’ half-brother, James, writes: (James 4:7-10 – *“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸ Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹ Lament and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy into dejection. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.”*

2. The happiness of seeing God is promised to those, and only those, who are *pure in heart*. None but the pure are capable of seeing God.

➤ Phil. 4:8 – ***“Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.”***

➤ Heb. 12:14 – ***“Pursue peace with everyone, and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.”***

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