

## THE GOSPEL IN PRINCIPLE 5 (Step 6 AND 7)

### Introduction

We come tonight to the sixth beatitude: “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matt 5:8). We have been looking at the gospel in the principles of Celebrate Recovery, and I have chosen to follow the beatitudes as Jesus gave them, even if it’s not the order of CR. We have talked about how the beatitudes demonstrate our growth as Christians and our progress in recovery. We come into recovery, and we come to Jesus Christ broke; poor in spirit; nothing to offer; and we discover that this is the attitude of one who experiences the kingdom of heaven. We mourn over our sin, and experience the comfort of the One we have sinned against. We become meek; teachable; humble; and discover that it is the meek, as Jesus was meek, who inherit the earth.

It’s about us in the first three beatitudes – digging deep in the dirt of our lives to find the seed of God’s grace. And then we discover that we are hungry for righteousness, which means that we are hungry for Jesus. And He satisfies us. We have life in Christ; we now have his righteousness.

And the rest of the beatitudes then reflect the fruit of the seed of grace growing in us; the life of Christ growing in us.

So we become merciful where we were too self-centered before. We show mercy, just as God has shown us mercy. And as this attitude or mercy develops within us, we look forward to the road of mercy leading us to forgiving others, as Christ has forgiven you.

Tonight we look at what it means to be pure in heart, and what it means that the pure in heart shall indeed see God.

To start, there are two important words: “pure” and “heart.” What does the Bible mean when we read “heart”? It is rarely used to describe a physical organ. We should understand heart to be “the center of things” (get to the heart of a matter). It is a definition of our character (He has the heart of a lion – he is fearless and courageous). It is a measure of purpose (I will do what it is in my heart to do). So the Great Commandment says to “Love the Lord with all your heart, mind, soul and strength” – Jesus is quoting Dt 6:5, which could be read, “Love the LORD with all heart – that is, with all your mind, soul and strength.” Your heart is who you are; your heart is your essence.

And who we are in our natural state, in our flesh, in our sin nature, is deceitful: “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it (Jer 17:9)?”

And yet Jesus says, “Blessed are the pure in heart.” How can this be? Pure has the sense of clean, undefiled and spotless (pure as the driven snow) and it has the sense of undivided, complete, 100%, perfected (pure gold).

So to be pure in heart is indeed a blessing, because none of us, even on our best days, when we are at our most loving, patient and kind would ever be able to describe ourselves as “pure in heart.” We are blessed because we have been made pure in heart – God sees us as pure in heart because He sees in us the righteousness of Christ, and as a result of His work in us, we will see God, Who is of course pure.

As Christians, we work the steps and principles of recovery and we work the beatitudes. So again – we start by confessing our brokenness; our poverty of spirit; we mourn; we become meek – and as we work (and God works in us) we see progress; we see fruit. And just as we become more merciful, so now we realize the blessing that we are becoming more and more pure in heart – our character is becoming more and more like that of God; we are more and more undivided in our pursuit of His righteousness, and the stain of our sin is becoming less and less.

How does this happen? There is God's part, and there is our part.

First, let's look at God's part:

#### God Gives His Heart to You

When we fall in love with someone, we say that we have “given our heart” to them. To give our heart is to communicate that we desire a deep relationship with that person. In a very real way, God has given His heart to you. Now in a human relationship, the more needy the two people are, the more issues will likely develop. We give our hearts to another, but we need something in return – our love is then conditional; expectations are attached.

But God has given us His heart, and He needs absolutely nothing. In this sense, He is the perfect Lover – we don't have to worry about meeting His needs, so to speak. He simply chose to create us for the express purpose of having a relationship with us – a relationship that would bless us and bring glory to His name.

Now because God is holy, He is pure, and He will ultimately be in relationship only with those whose hearts are pure. So, He takes the initiative to make those He has chosen pure in heart.

We see His desire to make us pure as far back as the book of Exodus. God has redeemed His people from slavery in Egypt, and now at Mount Sinai, He has given instructions through Moses on exactly how His people are to be in relationship with Him – these instructions are the Law, which only His chosen people were blessed to receive.

And now in chapter 24, God instructs Moses to make a covenant as a sign of the promise God has made to His people and the promise His people are making to Him. So sacrifices are made, and then we read:

<sup>8</sup> And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, “Behold the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words.”

Scripture says that “life is in the blood” – so interesting, this symbolism, as it is the heart pumping life throughout our bodies. And the people are splattered with blood, a very visible reminder of the covenant they have just made with their Creator.

Now we know the history – God kept His promise to us, but we have not kept our promise to Him. Our hearts have strayed, but God’s heart for us has not strayed. So even as His people were sent into exile, as a result of their continual desire to give their hearts to other lovers, He promises to be forever faithful. This passage from Ezekiel is just one example of His promise to us:

<sup>19</sup> And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, <sup>20</sup> that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

We are here tonight because our hearts have not been pure – they have been divided in their desires, and they have been stained by our behavior. And yet God says, “OK, I will give you a new heart. I am going to perform heart surgery. I will remove your heart of stone, and give you a pure heart. I will give you a piece of my heart.”

Imagine a heart surgeon performing a heart transplant on his own child – not just the skill involved, but the love and care as well. That is what God has done for you. He has performed a heart transplant on His beloved child. If you love Jesus, it is only because He has given you His heart, and it is a pure heart.

#### God Poured Out His Heart for You

God has given you a pure heart – a piece of His heart – that beats for Jesus. And God has poured out His heart for you. It’s what Jesus did at the Cross.

All of the OT sacrifices point to the blood of the Lamb. The blood of animals could not ultimately wash us clean, but they should be seen as a foreshadowing of the ultimate sacrifice to end all sacrifices. When we read of the splattering of blood by Moses onto his people, you can better understand what Jesus said at the Last Supper:

<sup>27</sup> And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you, <sup>28</sup> for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

God has made a promise to you, and Jesus has made a new covenant to ratify God's promise. He spilled His blood; literally poured out His heart, to make you pure.

Do you understand this? Does your heart believe that you are forgiven because Jesus has shed His blood for you? Does your heart believe this? It makes no difference if your head knows this – head knowledge is ultimately useless if your heart cannot see that you're forgiven. "You don't know what I've done." Maybe not (actually I do know a lot of what some of you have done), but it does not matter. Seeing your sin clearly, naming it in Steps 4 and 5, and then accepting the forgiveness that Jesus offers is the absolute key to recovery. Many of us struggle in our recovery because our heart does not believe that Jesus is making us pure. Hear the writer of Hebrews:

<sup>22</sup> let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience.

Full assurance – your heart must know that it has been implanted in you by God, and that Jesus has spilled his blood to wash us clean. An evil conscience has no place in the heart of a Christian. A guilty Christian is an oxymoron. As long as it resides there, your recovery will be slow or stalled.

Now don't add to a guilty conscience by saying at this point, "I can't even believe right!" You are in the process of being made pure – struggling to believe the Gospel is the great human struggle. This is why we need to remind ourselves that the blood of Jesus has washed us clean, and His Spirit continues to sprinkle us clean with this truth.

It is like Jesus and Peter, when Jesus washed the disciples' feet on the night before He died. Peter objected to the Son of God washing his feet, but Jesus says, that He must if Peter is to have any part of a relationship with Him, then He must wash His feet. Peter, being the impetuous disciple that he was, says, "Then please wash all of me!" (How about doing just what Jesus asks? He's God – how can our plan be better?) Jesus says, "The one who has bathed is completely clean. Only his feet need to be washed." You have been forgiven in Christ. Therefore, you are completely clean. But there are times when your feet get dirty with sin, and God's Spirit and God's Word will effectively cleanse us.

God the Great Surgeon has performed a heart transplant on His beloved child. Jesus the perfect Lamb of God has poured out his heart; his blood to cleanse you and wash away the stain of your guilt. The healing process has begun. This new cleansed heart must now get strong enough to beat on its own – it is why we stay in the hospital for a while after open-heart surgery.

And the doctor comes to check on us and give us instructions on how to heal. "I want you to walk around the corridors five times today. I want you to begin thinking about eating healthy. I want no stress in your life now, and begin to plan the lifestyle changes you will need to make to stay healthy. You have a new, clean heart. Now you have to take care of it."

You are here for healing tonight. Hearts are sprinkled clean here. We hear the truth of God's love and faithfulness. We feel safe – safe to be sinners. Our new heart begins to see hope. The heart begins to believe, and we catch glimpses of

God. Our hearts are becoming pure, and we see God; we experience Him in ways we have not experienced previously. John says this:

<sup>2</sup> Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. <sup>3</sup> And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

We get stronger, and we check out of the hospital.

### God Gives the Heart What It Desires

This does not mean we are done with recovery. In fact, the work has just begun, just as every heart patient goes to cardiac rehab.

My dad had open-heart surgery when he was 64 yrs. Old. It was a big deal – it was a difficult recovery; painful. But he took his cardiac rehab seriously. His lifestyle changed dramatically – prior to the surgery he was a heavy smoker, ate whatever he wanted and probably drank too much as well. His diet changed, he never smoked again and he paid a lot of attention to every detail of his physical health. He did not do it on his own – he joined a cardiac rehab class, and he stayed with that class for years. He met some of his best friends there – people who knew the fear of having a defective heart, and who bonded together to fight and enjoy the new life that a repaired heart afforded them.

You are in spiritual cardiac rehab here. It's exactly what recovery looks like. If my dad had not done the work; the exercise; the improved diet; together with his cardiac rehab friends; if his heart had led him back to cigarettes and steak and martinis, how long do you the gift of a new heart would have lasted?



Showing up to this cardiac rehab class we call Celebrate Recovery is really important. As we say, just showing up the first night is often the hardest step you will take. But if you show up and do no work, your new heart; implanted in by God; washed clean by Jesus; will stay weak and unhealthy. God does his part to make us pure – thank God! But He has given us instructions on how to care for our new heart, and those instructions include working to purify ourselves.

That is why I've titled this section "God gives the heart what it desires." He gives us a new heart created to beat for Him, but it is a heart that is free to desire what it wants.

We read the passage from Ezekiel where God promises to give us a new heart. But notice v. 21: "But as for those whose heart goes after their detestable things and their abominations, I will bring their deeds upon their own heads, declares the Lord GOD."

Our heart is free to choose. It has to be that way. God will not coerce us to love Him. What intimate relationship could ever work by coercion? We are free to choose to purify our hearts, and we are free to not attend cardiac rehab.

C.S. Lewis says this: "There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, "Thy will be done," and those to whom God says, in the end, "Thy will be done." All that are in Hell, choose it. Without that self-choice there could be no Hell. No soul that seriously and constantly desires joy will ever miss it.

We are not in heaven yet, nor are we in hell. But there is no reason for a child of God to be in "hell on earth" unless they choose to be. "Choose life," Moses

says to his people. Choose heaven now, I say. Purify your hearts – do the work of spiritual cardiac rehab.

Any cardiac rehab program has two important components – exercise and diet. So it is with purifying our hearts.

First, exercise – the work of cardiac rehab is to burn calories. The work of spiritual cardiac rehab is to burn off the dross to get to the pure gold. God gave us a piece of His heart – it is more valuable than gold, but that gold must be purified by fire. Proverbs 17: 3 says:

<sup>3</sup>The crucible is for silver, and the furnace is for gold,  
and the LORD tests hearts.

He will push you to get into spiritual shape – thank God for this grace in your life. You are no longer a slave to sin, but you are called to fight sin, and so now, as you grow in recovery, you'll find yourself in the boxing ring, in better and better shape to fight sin. This is what it means to purify yourself. You will get knocked down, but you will win more and more often as you discipline yourself to get into spiritual shape. In this analogy, your sponsor is your trainer in the corner, pushing you, watching you get knocked down and encouraging you to get up. Every time you get up, you are doing the work of purification. Every time you get up, the dross is being separated from the heart God has given you.

And eat right – eat God's word: "Taste and see that the Lord is good." Listen to solid Biblical teaching. Interact with people who are good for you. Let God's word and God's people nourish you. Consume the truth of God's love for you –

keep consuming it until your heart is satisfied; until your heart desires nothing but Jesus and His word.

And as you do this work of spiritual cardiac rehab; as you purify yourself even as God has already purified you, you will experience the blessing of this beatitude – you shall see God. You won't see Him physically, of course, but the eyes of your heart will be opened. You will see the hope to which he has called you – you are no longer stuck in the darkness of hopelessness. The eyes of your heart will now see what you have been created for – created to inherit the kingdom of Christ, and created to experience the power that is yours in Jesus – power that has not only saved you from death, but power that makes you strong in Christ now.

This is good news. This is the Gospel in the Beatitudes. It is the Gospel of recovery. Pursue a pure heart, and see God, in full assurance of faith. If He is what you desire, He will gladly give Himself to you.