

Matthew 5:8

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Preacher: Nathan Raynor

[0:00] Our text for today is Matthew chapter 5 and verse 8. In our study of the Sermon on the Mount in the past weeks, we have seen the overarching question before us, What characterizes those who follow the King of the Kingdom of Heaven?

We have noted back many times in Matthew chapter 4, verse 17. Matthew records the beginning of Jesus' ministry and says, from that time Jesus began to preach, saying, repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.

This was the theme of Jesus' teaching. And then we saw at the beginning of Matthew chapter 5 that crowds gather and they gather onto an unnamed mountain.

And when Jesus sits down, His disciples come to Him. And He opens His mouth and He teaches them. So, the primary audience for this sermon are Jesus' disciples.

Those who are already His followers. And Jesus is here declaring that the citizens of His Kingdom are blessed or flourishing.

[1:23] They're doing well as citizens of this Kingdom. We've looked at the first five of these declarations of blessedness.

And this morning I invite you to join me in considering the sixth. Before I read it, I want to remind you, beloved, this is God's Word to us. It was written for His glory and for our good.

We would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and obey its commands. Matthew chapter 5 and verse 8. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Jesus declares that the pure in heart are blessed. And so we must endeavor to know what is meant by this.

The great 18th century pastor Martin Lloyd-Jones referred to Matthew chapter 5 verse 8 as one of the greatest utterances in all of Scripture.

[2:28] Whether or not you agree with his assertion, there is much to be said about such a verse. In fact, volumes upon volumes of work have been written on this small phrase.

Now, our time this morning will not allow us to probe the very depths of such a declaration. Our time will only permit us to get at its central meaning.

That's the intention of today. So, be encouraged to consider its meaning further. Not just a text like this, but any text that we open together as a church.

Meditate upon it throughout the week and have conversations about it. You, with the rest of the church, probe the depths of the things that we study on Sunday morning.

That said, I would like to first deal this morning from our text with the word heart. What is this heart that is meant to be pure?

[3:35] Recall that one of the two overarching themes that I have asserted carried throughout the Sermon on the Mount is this idea of whole person righteousness.

This beatitude speaks directly to this theme. So, we should not be at all surprised that Jesus speaks of the heart in this most famous of His sermons.

So, this idea of whole person righteousness and then Jesus uses this word that means whole person. There is great biblical emphasis placed upon the heart and the condition of it.

When you see this word heart in your English translation of both the Old and New Testaments, it is most often, not in every case, but it is most often referring to our very being.

The non-physical part of you. Your mind, your will, your personality, right? What makes you you apart from this flesh vessel that carries the you that you are.

[4:49] And the heart is the source of all that we are. Proverbs 4.23 says, keep your heart with all vigilance.

Why? For from it flows the springs of life. Let's look briefly at some other places in the Bible that will help us to see this point concerning the heart and the condition of it.

So first, in the Old Testament, when God is deciding that He will destroy the earth with a flood, in Genesis 6.5 we can read, the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

So man in his very being was nothing but evil, right? And God looks at this and says it must be destroyed.

Psalms 27.8 David says, you have said, seek my face.

[6:03] And then the response of David is, my heart says to you, your face Lord, do I seek. And then in Ezekiel 36.

And verse 26. And if you're doing the Bible reading with us, this was from yesterday's reading. God says, and I will give you a new heart and a new spirit I will put within you.

And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. We know this as the doctrine of regeneration. I will change your very being.

And in the New Testament, those are just a few of the Old Testament examples. In the New Testament, Matthew chapter 15, verse 17 and following.

Jesus says, do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and is expelled? He's simply saying, the stuff that you eat is not what defiles you.

[7:11] Because it leaves you. But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart. From who you are.

In verse 18, the last half says, and this defiles a person. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander.

So, if you are evil, then you do evil. In Ephesians chapter 4, in verse 18, Paul makes a case that those who are in Christ, who have been made new, are to no longer walk as those who have not been made new.

And he says this of those people. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to their hardness of heart.

And then those who have been set free, those who have been set free from the bondage of sin, who have been made regenerate. Paul writes of them in Romans chapter 6, verse 17, Thanks be to God that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed.

[8:42] So, Jesus says that it is a person who has purity of being that are declared blessed.

Note carefully in Matthew 5, verse 8, that he says pure in heart, not pure in head. You can come up with all the right answers and still be desperately lost.

In the day in which we live, there are many, many who could explain the gospel of Jesus Christ to you but have not placed believing faith in it. It is the pure in heart that are declared blessed by Jesus, not the pure in head.

And I should say, not only pure in head, for surely our very being includes our thought life. Matthew chapter 15, verse 8, Jesus says, This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.

Note also that Jesus says, pure in heart, not pure in conduct. You can appear to be pure by your action and still be desperately lost.

[10:05] It is the pure in heart that are declared blessed by Jesus, not the pure in conduct. Again, I should say, not only pure in conduct, for surely our very being includes our actions.

In fact, the way we think and feel and act is the proofing of who we are. It's the evidencing of who we are.

But it is who we are, not what we do, that is Jesus' focus here. In Matthew chapter 23, it's the chapter known as the woes chapter.

Jesus declares the woes, the seven woes over the Pharisees. And one of them, verse 25 and following, he says, Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites.

For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. So you see what he's saying? You clean up the outside of it, right?

[11:10] You make it look nice on the outside, but the actual useful part is dirty. You catching that? I don't care if my cup is dirty on the outside, if the inside is clean. Your focus is all wrong here.

You don't clean up the inside. Inside, you're full of greed and self-indulgence. And then verse 26, you blind Pharisees. First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean.

So if our hearts are pure, then what proceeds from us will be purity. So Jesus is concerned about the totality of who we are as he addresses our hearts this morning.

But let us now consider the qualifier that Jesus puts on the heart that is declared blessed. Jesus says it is the pure in heart that are flourishing.

What then does it mean to be pure in heart? For the totality of our inner selves to be pure.

[12:20] Now this is a word with some texture to it. First, it can mean without hypocrisy or singularly focused.

Psalms 86.11. David, I believe, if I'm remembering correctly, says, Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth. Unite my heart to fear your name.

Don't let me be a man who is divided. But put my heart into a singular focus that stands in the awe of God so that I will walk in your truth.

Paul writes in Romans 7. The opposite of this. An ununited heart. Verse 21 and 22. He says, So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand.

For I delight in the law of God in my inner being. And he goes on to talk about this great struggle of these two things that wage war within him.

[13:29] An ununited heart. So, pure means without hypocrisy. It also means without blemish or without any uncleanness.

The Apostle John writes in Revelation 21 and verse 27, Nothing unclean will ever enter the new Jerusalem. Nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

And then later in Revelation 22 and verse 14, Blessed are those who wash their robes that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates.

So, to be pure also means to be washed clean, to be without blemish. So, to be without hypocrisy and to be without blemish, but I think for us to be pure in heart most emphatically means for us to be like Jesus Christ.

A great example of purity of heart. The writer of Hebrews speaks at length about this in Hebrews chapter 4. I want to read to you just verse 15.

[14:49] Where the writer of Hebrews speaks of Jesus as a great high priest. And the high priest who went in to make sacrifice on the day of atonement had to be sacrificially washed clean.

He had to go through a ton of process to be considered clean in order to enter into the presence of God. The writer of Hebrews says this about Jesus. For we do not have a high priest who was unable to sympathize with our weakness, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are yet without sin.

So, already pure. It doesn't have to go through ritualistic cleansing, but Jesus Christ himself is pure. Tempted in every way yet without sin.

And it's important that we are like this. That we are holy as Christ is holy. Again, the writer of Hebrews says, chapter 12 and verse 14, strive for peace with everyone and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

To be pure in heart means to fulfill the greatest commandment. Matthew chapter 22 and verse 37 and following Jesus says, having been tested is the greatest commandment.

[16:14] He responds, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment and a second like it so he expands it beyond you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

So, to be pure in heart is to be without hypocrisy, without blemish, to be like Christ in our devotion to God. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind.

Martin Lloyd-Jones again, this is the quotation on your bulletin this morning, said, to be pure in heart means we have an undivided love which regards God as our highest good and which is concerned only about loving God.

God. So, to be pure in heart means to be like Christ. Beloved, this is not something that is accomplished by our well-wishing or by our effort, but by God imputing our sin to Christ and by imputing to us the righteousness of Christ.

Martin Luther called this the great exchange. He took our sin and gave it to Jesus who knew no sin. He became sin on our behalf and the wrath of God was poured out on him and his righteousness, his perfect life was given to us.

[17:43] This is called double imputation. You don't have to know that. But you have to know that there was an exchange that happened when you placed faith in Jesus Christ.

That not only was the debt of your sin canceled, but you were given righteousness. It's as if you fulfilled the law. It's as if you kept it perfectly because your sin was punished in him and he kept it perfectly on your behalf.

We don't do this on our own. We are incapable of doing this on our own. God gifts us with faith to believe in the all sufficient purity of Jesus Christ and by that faith gives us a declaration of pure. Having been made pure in heart, having been made positionally changed from being unclean, hypocritical, we have been changed to be pure in heart and therefore we act accordingly.

We act as we are. Look with me at the framework of the Beatitudes. So if you've left Matthew chapter 5, please go back to Matthew chapter 5.

[19:10] Jesus did not utter these declarations in random order. They each stand alone, to be sure, but they also work in harmony together.

Let me show you what I mean by this. And let me issue a warning as I'm about to do this too. We do have to be very careful when we apply framework to text of the Bible, lest we end up making the scripture say what we are trying to make it say in the application.

I've read many applied frameworks that you just go, I don't even see how they got to this place, but often they're trying to draw a connection to a singular point, and that's why it gets applied in that way.

I think this is a very fair framework. I think this is correct. I think this is why Jesus spoke them in this order. But we take my framework not as inspired.

The text is inspired. So, there's your warning. So, first, let's look at the first three Beatitudes. This is verses 3, 4, and 5. You see in these three a recognition of our great awareness of need.

[20:20] You see the three that there are there. We see that we have a spiritual poverty, nothing to offer God. We come to Him empty-handed, simply to the cross we cling to be found righteous in Christ.

We have no works that we can bring to God and say, look at what I've done. Look at how I've accomplished. None of that will be of any credit before God.

So, we're spiritually impoverished. We have great need. We mourn over this. We have a deep sin, and the sin of the world around us.

We flee to the cross impoverished and mourning over our sinfulness. And, in meekness, we recognize our state.

We have a humility that doesn't seek retribution. It doesn't try to defend our rights at all costs. So, these three express this great awareness of need.

[21:17] Now, the fourth beatitude, in verse six, we see that that need is met. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst long for this thing they don't have, this expressed need in the first three beatitudes, because, they're blessed because, they shall be satisfied.

So, they hunger and thirst for righteousness, these blessed, and they're filled. And, they're filled. And, then, beatitude five through seven, five, six, and seven, found in verses seven, eight, and nine, is the overflow of this being filled.

The overflow of this being filled is that these people, myself, and I hope you this morning, find ourselves having been filled, overflowing as a merciful, pure, peacemaking people.

And, in the final beatitude, found in verses 10 through 12, we see the result of this lived righteousness, this filled up, overflowing, lived righteousness, this mercy and purity and

peacemaking is what?

Persecution. That we will be persecuted for righteousness. For righteousness sake. So, I hope you can see the flow.

[22:44] I think that Jesus builds us to the fourth beatitude and the meeting of this need and that becomes the watershed, so to speak, of the beatitudes, right? And then the living that follows and the result of this kind of living, right?

So, we act as we are. so we do not say, oh, if I can just be pure in heart and then labor under our own might to do such and such or to not do such and such, but rather, having been made righteous by the goodness of God toward us in the person and work of Jesus Christ, we evidence our salvation in the way that we live.

we must be so careful in our understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ for our sake and for the sake of others.

I have resolved as a pastor that I'm going to spend my life answering three questions again and again and again and it is an honor to do so.

You would think some of these questions we could move beyond, but I don't think we're ever going to do so in our age. And those three questions are, what is the Bible? It's the inerrant, all-powerful, sufficient, authoritative word of God.

[24:08] I keep drawing people back to that great truth in this age of skepticism and opinion nation. Secondly, what is the gospel?

What is the gospel? I'm going to talk more about that in a second. And third, what is the church? Helping people to come to understand how it is that God's people are meant to gather and to go. But in answering the question, what is the gospel? In an age of decisionism, where to be known by Christ, it would be taught to you that all you must do is raise your hand, no one's looking around, every head bowed, every eye closed.

I could fall right into it. We walk out here, we take a little stroll, I see you brother, I see that hand going up, right? We press, we emotionally manipulate, we push at people, and then, once they filled out a card, we say, there is your assurance, right?

It's a date, and it's a time. Many of you have heard me say before, I grew up in a church under a pastor who said, if you ever doubt your salvation, turn to the front of your Bible where you wrote down the date you walked the aisle, and meditate on that date.

[25:25] And this type of teaching damns people to hell. To say, merely the act of walking, now praise the Lord, he has saved people in invitations. Many of you may have responded to an invitation like that, and God saved you.

It was not the invitation that saved you. It was a good and gracious God who changed your heart and caused you to believe in him. So the scripture tells us, if you doubt your salvation, go and look at what Christians look like.

What do citizens of the kingdom of heaven do? Find yourself in the Beatitudes. Could you say of yourself, yes, this is me, impoverished of spirit, mourning over my sin, meek, not seeking out retribution, hungering and thirsting for righteousness.

God is working in me, mercy and purity and peacemaking. I'm experiencing the persecution, the push, back from the world for living in this way.

If you don't find yourself in this, you've either wandered from the truth or you've never believed it to begin with. In an age of decision, we have to be so accurate, so precise, an age of easy believism that expects nothing of you, that would teach you that Jesus could be your savior, but he doesn't have to be your lord.

[26:49] This is false, it is heretical to say such a thing. If Jesus is your savior, he is your lord. If you have beheld the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, you will have no option but to say, yes, sir.

We must be those who are a beacon of the truth for the sake of souls. Everybody you meet will live forever.

1 John chapter 1 verse 5 to 10. The apostle John addresses this. This is one of those places, right? What do we do when someone isn't confident of their faith?

If you find yourself in that place, the whole book of 1 John is about this. And not once does he say, turn to the front of your Bible and look at a date. He says, rather, verse 5 and following, this is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him is no darkness at all.

Okay, so God is perfectly holy. In him is light and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, so while our life is characterized by sinfulness, right? [28:14] Not that we sin at times, beloved, we all do this, but while we walk in it, it is who we are. Verse 6 goes on to say, we lie and do not practice the truth.

But if we say we walk in the light, our lives are characterized by walking in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his son, cleanses us from all sin. Now, if you are objecting to anything I'm saying right now, at this point you might go, but wait, none of us are perfect, how dare anybody say they're walking in the light? John does the same thing, so here we go.

He says, if we say we have no sin, so don't you dare, right? If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. So he punctuates, walking in the light doesn't mean we're sinless, right?

It means we're characterized by pursuing truth, characterized by mercy and purity of heart and peacemaking, right? Because we're liars if we say we have no sin.

[29:22] But then verse 9 and 10, if we confess our sins, he's faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. We continue to persist in this walking in the light, this pursuing of holiness.

If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar and his word is not in us. So we want to look at a text like this. We want to say, oh, do I walk in darkness or do I walk in light?

We want to go to other places in the scripture that help us to understand what walking in the light looks like. What are the deeds of the flesh? And what are the deeds of the spirit?

Am I characterized by one or the other? And if we find that we're characterized by those like those who walk in darkness, then repent. Repent and turn to faith in Jesus Christ.

Your great effort, your highest effort at righteousness is going to fall miserably short of God's standard of righteousness. It will only be found by having Jesus' righteousness given to you, imputed to you.

[30:31] Look to Christ. Jesus says that it is the pure in heart that are blessed. Why are the pure in heart declared blessed?

Because they shall see God. This is so good. This is so good. They shall see God.

This statement by Jesus would have sent his Jewish audience's minds skipping off to Exodus chapter 33. Your mind might not have done that and that's okay.

But you can flip right now with me to Exodus chapter 33 and verse 18. This is right where their minds would have gone. See God really? That's what they would have said in my imagination.

So in Exodus chapter 33 Israel's encamped at Mount Sinai. Previously Moses has gone up on the mountain and received the Ten Commandments. He's come back down from the mountain. He's discovered God's people already have forsaken him, have created a golden calf that according to Aaron magically jumped out of the fire.

[31:45] Moses gets furious, breaks the stones of tablet, goes back up onto the mountain. God says, I'm done with you God agrees that he'll go with them.

First he says he'll go with Moses and Moses says, oh, but you must go with us. He agrees that he'll do this thing. So it's this amazing act of mercy on God's part. So that's my super quick summary of a couple of chapters that leads Moses to ask this astounding thing.

It's huge. Early readers of this would have gone, what? You asked God, what? Moses said, verse 18, please, he knows it's a big ask, please show me your glory, right?

He's asking for God to show him very self, his being, who he is. And this is God's response to him. I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name, the Lord, and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious and I will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.

But he said, God said, you cannot see my face for man shall not see me and live. And behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock.

[33:17] And while my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft of the rock. That's a little alcove of the rock. And I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by.

Then I will take away my hand and you shall see my back. But my face shall not be seen. So God says, I will grant you your request, but in a way that won't kill you.

I'm just going to let you see me as I pass by. All my goodness! And beloved, we come to the New Testament, to the New Covenant, and we read in John 1 and verse 14, And the word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

And then in verse 18, no one has ever seen God, the only God, who is at the Father's side. He, being Jesus, has made Him, being God, known.

So we behold the glory of God as we look at Christ in a sense. Many of you are familiar with the hymn Rock of Ages, written by the 18th century hymnist Augustus Toplady, who's one of my, he's got the greatest name, anyway, of hymn writers, where he wrote this, Rock of Ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in thee, he's talking about Jesus, right, let me be in your, clothed in you, your righteousness, right, let the water and the blood from thy wounded side, which flowed, be of sin, the double cure, double imputation, that's what he's talking about, be of sin, the double cure, save from wrath and make me pure, incredible, it's an astounding truth, that we get a glimpse of God himself and all his glory as we behold

[35:41] Christ, as with all of the blessed declarations, there is an element of now and not yet, now and not yet, Paul writes in 1 Corinthians chapter 13 verse 12, for now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face, now I know in part, then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known, so I'm believing, right, having been given a glimpse of the glory of God in Jesus Christ, that we'll get a greater glimpse of that, that we have seen God now, but we'll more fully see him then.

The apostle John, again in Revelation chapter 22, verses 3 and 4, writes, no longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him, they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.

It is an incredible thing to behold God in knowing and being known by Jesus Christ, and it will be a further astounding thing to behold him more fully on the magnificent day when we are glorified with him.

I hope that you'll be counted in that number. If you don't think you will, turn to God by faith in Christ this morning. Beloved, because those who are pure in heart will see God, we have great hope for today, and we have great hope for forever.

We find in this utterance of our Lord great reason to rejoice in his gracious work on our behalf.

There's our application, right? At least part of it for it this morning.

[37:40] Have a great hope. Rejoice in the goodness of God to you in Christ. And we also find great reason to pursue purity, right?

To show ourselves to be in the faith, to press on in holiness, to find a confidence that God is at work within us for the praise of his name to the ends of the earth.

I want to close with a little bit of a hymn by another famous 18th century hymn writer by the name of Fanny Crosby. The song is called My Savior First of All.

I don't think this one's familiar to you. Please tell me later if it is. I had never heard of it before. She wrote this, When my life work is ended and I cross the swelling tide, when the bright and glorious morning I shall see, I shall know my Redeemer when I reach the other side, and his smile will be the first to welcome me.

Through the gates of the city in a robe of spotless white, he will lead me where no tears will ever fall. In the glad songs of ages I shall mingle with the delight, but I long to meet my Savior first of all.

[39:03] Blessed are those who are pure in heart, for they shall see God. Let's pray together.