

October 29, 2013

Session six - The Pure in Heart

Matthew 5:8 “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”

καθαρός (*katharos*) from the BDAG Lexicon

1. Clean or free of adulterating matter, *clean, pure*
2. Cultically/ceremonially pure, *ritually pure*
3. Free from moral guilt, *pure, free fr. sin*
4. Pure ritually and morally, *pure*, ritual and moral purity merge

Psalm 24:1-5

This psalm likely forms the background and context for this beatitude. Notice how it expands beyond just a pure heart to include also clean hands, refusing falsehood, and not swearing deceitfully.

Matthew 5:27-30

This is perhaps the most famous text regarding lust. Here Jesus employs hyperbole to emphasize the importance of dealing with inappropriate sexual behavior at its root. The issue starts in the mind, and nothing is unseen by God

Luke 12:2-3 “But there is nothing covered up that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known. Accordingly, whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in the inner rooms will be proclaimed upon the housetops.”

Luke 16:14-15 “Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, were listening to all these things and were scoffing at Him. And He said to them, “You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God.”

Ezekiel 8:7-12

This graphic portrayal shows how silly we are when we suppose God does not see us or what we do. He sees all, and we cannot escape from His presence (Psalm 139:7-12).

Matthew 6:1-6, 14-18; 7:1-5

Much of the Sermon on the Mount focuses on motives. We should not practice our righteousness before men to be noticed by them. We should have pure actions driven by pure motives. Both are necessary. If we ignore the former, we are negligent; and if the latter, hypocritical.

Matthew 4:1-11

When Satan tempted Jesus, he focused on doubt. He wanted to inject some corruption into Jesus' heart. He dared him to prove that he really was the Son of God by turning the stone to bread, jumping off the top of the temple, and by accepting his offer of rulership over the world.

Luke 7:34-35 "The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, 'Behold a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is vindicated by all her children."

For Jesus, purity did not reduce to puritanism. He did not erect fence laws and frequently jumped over the ones the Pharisees had constructed. He could be in the world without being of it (John 17:14-18). Jesus did not fear contamination, but neither did he allow peer pressure or sinful behavior to overcome him. He could spend time with tax collectors and sinners with a mind clear on his purpose (Luke 5:27-32).

Mark 7:1-23

Once again Jesus stresses that true defilement arises from what is inside of us. Cleaning the outside is futile if our insides are dirty. Remember the Church Lady on Saturday Night Live? She was so prim and proper on the outside, but she unrelentingly judged and accused everyone else.

Luke 18:9-14

The story about the prayers of the Pharisee and the tax collector helpfully illustrates that a pure heart directs its focus to God rather than looking down on the shortcomings of others.

Peace Makers

Matthew 5:9

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

The peacemaker is one who is pure in heart and, having received the peace of God in his own life, brings peace to his neighbor. Peace is a beautiful quality of life which is uncommon to most people. Humans do not come into the world with peace in their hearts. Since the fall of man with Adam and Eve, mankind struggles to have peace with God, peace within oneself, and peace with his fellow man. Only by means of the faith of Jesus Christ can we attain peace with God.

Romans 4:25 and 5:1

He who was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification.

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Until we have peace with God, it is impossible to attain peace within ourselves or with others. Peace with God is indeed the starting point, but we must then strive to enjoy peace within ourselves. Due to a number of reasons, we are often at enmity with ourselves. Perhaps, the most powerful negative influences are the lies we believe about ourselves. Common reflections of the heart are: "I hate myself," "I am no good," "I am worthless," "I am a loser." With such self hostilities, we fail to enjoy peace within. Even Christians endure the struggle of self loathing and acceptance. The Prince of Peace teaches in his Sermon on the Mount that the way to peace is by holding the beatitudes in mind. Paul succinctly states the process in Romans 8:6, "For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace." Those who are not at peace with themselves are vulnerable to the works of the flesh which include enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, and such like.

To make peace, you must have peace. Reflecting on the complete opposite of peacemakers can help us to understand the concept. Some antonyms include: the one who disturbs, agitates greatly, stirs up trouble, makes an uproar, and/or causes discord, dissension, division; a contentious, brawling, fighting person.

A peacemaker understands God's will for peace and is willing to do whatever necessary to ensure peace prevails. Rather than letting assumptions fester, he will speak up and address the problem. "I am tempted to believe that what you just said was an insult to me. Is that what you meant?" As uncomfortable as he may feel, he will not allow discord to rule.

The peacemakers believe the command of Mark 9:50, "Have peace one with another," and 1 Thessalonians 5:13, "Be at peace among yourselves." God wants peace in His family. The contentions and fights allowed by the church that exist within the church must be heartbreaking to our loving, heavenly Father.

Romans 14 offers great insight on the relationship Christians should have with each other. Although the specific issue discussed may deviate, the principles promoting peace are the same. People hold different viewpoints regarding the same subject, and apparently God is understanding of these differences and expects us to be too. We are constantly in association with fellow believers who are more or less mature than ourselves. Some brothers understand legalistic, Christian restrictions or the observance of special days are no longer required. Others believe dietary restrictions and observation of special days are necessary. The command given in light of these kinds of differences is to be loving, nonjudgmental, and accepting of God's sovereignty above our own opinion. The most important matter is not to be controlling or judging of other people but rather to have righteousness, peace, and joy. God emphatically communicates in this chapter that we are to follow after peace, which demands we be yielding.

Romans 14:17-19

The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

For he who in this way serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men.

So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.

When we fail to deal with the ill feelings we have toward a brother, we give way to contention and discord. Our Lord instructs us to deal with issues. He tells us not to be deceived into thinking we can worship God while maintaining evil in our hearts toward a brother.

Matthew 5:23 and 24

Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.

The relationship we have as members of the body of Christ is interdependent. We need each other. Every interdependent relationship experiences times of turbulence. When we have different viewpoints, we must still learn to maintain peace. At times, we will have unresolved issues with a brother, which we are encouraged to resolve. We have been given a godly format to follow when experiencing difficulties with a brother. The first thing to do (which usually resolves most problems) is to speak directly with him.

Matthew 18:15

If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother.

As peacemakers, we should persist and not give up if the problem is unresolved. The next step would be to get a third, impartial party involved.

Verse 16

But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed.

God so wants for us to live peaceably that if the situation still is not resolved, we should seek the help of the church. You may solicit the help of the elders or pastor for the purpose of reconciliation.

Verse 17

If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

If these three attempts fail, the instruction we are given is to treat the one as a heathen or publican. We are still to love and pray for him, but are not to maintain a close association. Someone who is determined to remain contentious after all these attempts will become a stumbling block to you and others within the household. The contentious individual sows seeds of contention with others and can destroy the family harmony by rallying others to their point of view thereby causing factions. Such people are to be avoided until they are ready to repent and reconcile.

Another important point is that a peacemaker should act quickly to resolve conflict before it develops into an irresolvable situation. Contentions have the nature of escalating rapidly, so we must deal immediately with them.

Matthew 5: 25 and 26

Make friends quickly with your opponent at law while you are with him on the way, so that your opponent may not hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you be thrown into prison.

Truly I say to you, you will not come out of there until you have paid up the last cent.

As peacemakers, we are not only concerned with the family of God but are to pursue peace with all men. "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men." (Romans 12:18). During the last supper, Jesus said the following about peace:

John 14:27 Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.

John 16:33 These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."

In Jesus, we will have peace, but in the world, we have tribulation. It is not possible to have peace constantly with everyone. Peacemakers are not always warmly received. When Moses tried resolving the dispute between two Israelite brothers, they turned and attacked him. He tried to be a peacemaker and received persecution in return. Our attempts to bring reconciliation and peace may be resisted with persecution and tribulation. Although our peacemaking efforts may be rejected today, the great promise is – "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God."

Hebrews 12:14

Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.

Matthew 8:26; 14:31; 16:8 – He did not water down truth; rather, he spoke with conviction and love.

Matthew 14: 28-33 – Hurting Peter's feelings did not seem to matter; rather, his concerns were the Kingdom and righteous living.

Matthew 15:12-20 – His aim was to please God, not man, so people often took offense to his words.

21-28 He did what was right first.

Matthew 16:23 – He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's."

Matthew 19:16 – 22 He did not speak to gain approval or acceptance, rather to help people reconcile to God and enter into the Kingdom.

John 6:41-ff Unity without truth was not of interest to our Lord.