

# **Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion**

**Date** : 26 Sep 2021

**Sermon Title** : Pure in Heart

**Speaker** : Rev Shannon Chan

**Text** : Matthew 5:8

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Purity is appealing to us, whether it is in gold or drinking water - how about in our hearts? Matthew 5:8 says, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

Ps Peter in his earlier sermon said that the Beatitudes may be divided into those on "being" and "doing":

The first four are on 'Being/Attitudes'

1. Those who are poor in spirit (v.3)
2. Those who mourn (v.4)
3. Those who are meek (v.5)
4. Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness (v.6)

Next four are on 'Doing/Actions'

5. Those who are merciful (v.7)
6. Those who are pure in heart (v.8)

## **Purity appeals to us, but even more so is the desire to be blessed.**

### **a) The desire to be blessed**

The word blessed (or happy) occurs nine times in this Jesus' first recorded great sermon. The word "blessed" is like a refrain God uses to call us to advance with Him on a road, for all its many challenges, promises to lead to true happiness. This longing for happiness or blessedness is put by God in all our hearts, at all times and through all ages.

- Genesis 1 shows us the splendid 'pure in heart attitude' to which we are called - a perfect communion with God, others, nature and self. But when our first parents yielded to temptation, the perfect communion was broken off and sin entered human history.
- Psalm 4:6 was a heart-felt plea to God to give blessedness. God in His infinite goodness responded by sending His Son, Jesus, in whom we see God taking on human face. In His incarnation, life, death and resurrection, Jesus frees us from sin and opens new and unimaginable horizons.
- In Christ alone we will find every fulfilment of blessedness and happiness and satisfaction for our deepest longings.

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*For we walk by faith, not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:7*

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**Christ alone stirs us to want to do something great in our lives through Kingdom living with a pure heart.**

## **b) “Blessed are the pure in heart...”**

The word ‘pure’ (Gk. – *katharos*) used in Matthew 5 means clean and undefiled.

In Mark 7:20-23, Jesus warned against evil that could defile us: evil thoughts, coveting, theft, murder, adultery, deceit, wickedness, sexual immorality, envy, sensuality, folly, pride and slander. Purity must be seen in the heart of a person:

- The heart refers to the core centre of a person where one’s thoughts, emotions, intentions and will are found. William Barclay likened purity with grains that are not mixed with chaff.
- Jesus was teaching that blessed are those whose motives are unmixed, who do things for nothing but the right reason. Our motives matter - God’s assessment of purity of our heart is our motive. Even doing the right thing but with a wrong motive is wrong. Therefore, we need to guard against wrong motive.
- Where your treasure is, there will your heart be: Rediscover the call to true love. The greatest good we can have in life is our relationship with God:
  - It is the knowledge that we are welcomed/loved by God unconditionally that gives meaning to our lives.
  - In Mark 10:17-22, Jesus had a conversation with a rich young ruler where He looked upon this young man and loved him, and invited him to follow Him to find true riches.

May the loving gaze of Jesus accompany us throughout our lives; to know that we are loved unconditionally by God no matter how tough things are, when we do not understand why and what is happening in our lives. How powerful it is to be loved and to be able to love as described in 1 Corinthians 13. Do not let this precious treasure be debased, destroyed or spoiled.

In this age of relativism, we live in a culture of self-determinism where people live according to their own desires. The challenge is to swim against this kind of tide and rediscover the beauty of the vocation to true love. God is not a cosmic kill-joy stifling our desire for happiness. Rather,

**God ordains the highest type of blessedness for a life capable of captivating all of our heart where we see God.**

## **c) “...for they shall see God”**

While God may appear to people in visions and dreams, the general experience is that “God is not seen”. Yet, God’s invitation to “Seek my face” resounds in our hearts. Our response should be, ‘Your face, LORD, I will seek’ (Psalm 27:8).

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- In Psalm 24:3-4, we are reminded that only those with pure heart and clean hands are able to stand in God's holy place. Yet God is always the one reaching out to each one of us, who purifies us so we can come into His presence.
- There will be the need for confession and repentance. (Psalm 51:10) The Christian life is not a one way ticket to heaven with one sinner's prayer but a lifestyle of self-examination, allowing the searchlight of God to shine into our hearts so that humble confessions and true repentance can take place to ensure that our heart's purity is maintained.
- It is also about encountering God through His Word and prayer. These are the basics in our journey to see God.
  - Let God's Word speak to our heart. We need to make time to read God's Word, apply and obey it, so our lives may be changed or transformed.
  - Let's make time to pray to help us recognize that God can be seen with spiritual eyes and through prayers, God's voice will help us better to know Him and to recognize His always presence.

God is always present. Can we see God in our everything - even in our most pain-filled days? Beyond this, do we realize that God can be seen in the least of these (Matthew 25:40) - our brothers and sister most forgotten; the poor, the hungry, those who thirst, the stranger, the sick, those who are imprisoned, despised, neglected and forgotten?

Mother Theresa saw Jesus in the least of these. We need to recognize that we are poor with the poor. A pure heart is one that is stripped bare, is able to bend down and able to share its life with those in need. This Covid-19 situation should not cause us to turn in to care for ourselves but drive us to go out to seek those in need because God can be seen in their faces.

'Les Miserables' is a story of the wretchedness of human condition. It is a story of pain and injustice, yet the power of God's love is able to transform lives, be it in the convict, prostitute, orphan or abandoned. As the writer of Les Miserables, Victor Hugo wrote on the blessedness of seeing God, "To love another person is to see the face of God".

## **CONCLUSION**

Even the best amongst us on this side of eternity are still works in progress in this journey to purity of heart, because we do not live perfectly or love perfectly. Yet, God in His graciousness continues to call us to seek His face, to humble confession and true repentance, to encounter Him in His Word and prayer and to see Him in faces of the least, the last and the lost, and even the ones we think are undeserving. May our eyes be opened to see God in our circumstances, in ways we have never seen

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before, even in this COVID-19 situation. If our hearts are clouded because we have resisted or are resisting God, let us clear it by yielding to Him. With hearts purified by Christ, we will see Him everywhere around us.

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# **Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion**

As a group, spend some time to share your success and struggle in fulfilling what you/your group had committed to do at the previous meeting.

## **A. Review Sermon Content**

***Purpose: Reflect on one key takeaway.***

Appoint someone to read Matthew 5:8 twice, slowly.

1. At the end of the reading, the reader will say, 'This is the Word of the Lord.'

All to respond, "Thanks be to God." Our response reminds us that this is the Word of the Lord. Just as God had spoken to His people in the past, He is still speaking to us even today, right now."

- a. As God's word was read, what is the key takeaway for you from the sermon "Pure in Heart"?

- b. How will you align the way you live to your key takeaway?

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## **B. Relate Sermon Content**

***Purpose: Relate with the Truth and Resolve for Transformation.***

- 2a. The 'reward' of being 'pure in heart' is to 'see the face of God'.
  - (i) How much do you desire to see the face of God? How does your lifestyle and use of time reflect a desire to see the face of God?
  - (ii) What do you need to change if you sincerely desire to see the face of God?
- 2b. Being pure in heart requires us to have pure motives in our actions.
  - (i) Reflect on your actions in the past week. How have you been pure or impure in your motive?
  - (ii) What do you need to confess to see the face of God? What is God calling you to do about your action that had been done with a wrong motive?
- 3a. Who amongst the last, least or lost is God calling you to love and serve with a pure motive?
- 3b. What act of love can you do out of a pure motive to the one God has called you to love and serve in 3a above?
- 3c. How can your group members encourage or help you to achieve 3b above so you can love with a pure motive, for the following week(s) till your next meeting?

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## **C. Testimonies and Prayer**

***Purpose: Give glory to God and seek Him.***

4. Share your testimony on how God is changing you in your “being” and “doing” of the Beatitudes.

OR

Give thanks to God for His promised blessings that you will see Him when you have a pure heart towards Him, nature and others.

5. With a prayer partner, take time to pray for the concerns in 3b and 3c. Examine the situation of your heart towards God’s call for you in 3a, and ask Jesus to purify your heart and enable you to overcome challenges or fears that you may face in fulfilling 3b and 3c.

As a group, discuss how you can help each other grow in the Beatitudes. Seek God’s revelation on which areas you need to be intentional to grow in ‘purity of heart’ – whether it is in confession, repentance, encountering God in His Word and prayer or opening your hearts to see Him in faces of the last, lost, least or undeserving. Commit to help and keep each other accountable for really seeking ‘God’s face’.

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