

Pastor Don Nelson

Sermon: August 2, 2009  
Beverly ECC, Chicago, IL

**“THE PURE”**  
**Matthew 5:8**

☺ An old cartoon shows a pastor and his wife deep in conversation. The wife says, “Let’s do something different today. Why don’t you be charming at home and grouchy at church?”

☑ I am not usually grumpy at home. Nevertheless, Beth and the girls have seen me at my crankiest – and you have not.

It used to be worse. For a while in my teens I knowingly wore one face out-and-about and another behind closed doors. Performing, always being “on,” and calculating every word was dishonest, and it sucked the life from my soul, but I was convinced that anyone who saw behind the mask would despise me.

I was very religious at the time. I pray that my pretense did not hinder anyone from coming to Jesus.

Thank God, He has liberated me! My public and my private selves are not in perfect sync, but the gap between who I am here and at home is just a sliver of what it was 30 years ago, and it continues to shrink.

⚙ Spiritual authenticity (which is when our words and deeds increasingly correspond to our attitudes and thoughts) is a hallmark of Kingdom living.

☑ By the same token, some churchgoers are thoughtless, profane, selfish, boastful, lewd, gossipy, domineering, dishonest, abusive or ruthless in any setting. I have seen religious men berate waitresses, service

operators, and their wives with equal nastiness. I have known religious woman whose tongues are as sharp in public as they are at home.

These people do not wear masks. With them, what you see is what you get; yet the effect is neither constructive nor pleasant. Their public and private faces *are* in sync – to the detriment of others.

When who we are falls so short of what Jesus said and did, “letting it all hang out” can tarnish his name and inhibit the work of the Gospel. We must be cleansed. We need to {Ro 12:2} **“be transformed by the renewing of [our minds].”**

⚙ Spiritual cleanness (which is when our inner being increasingly conforms to the goodness of Jesus) is also a hallmark of Kingdom living.

☐ Authenticity and cleanness are at the center of Beatitude number six. Hear the Word of the Lord in **Matthew 5:8 ~ “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.”**

● **“Blessed are the pure.”**

The Greek word for **“pure”** is καθαρος. It has two main senses:

📖 One concerns sanitation. Clothing, dishes, hands and faces are **“pure”** when there is no grime on them. Other words for this side of purity include: *clean, dirt free, fresh, hygienic, sanitary, spotless, uncontaminated, unpolluted, and unsoiled.*

📖 The other involves wholeness. An animal is a purebred if all its ancestors came from the same breed. Food qualifies as **“pure”** if it is untainted with

foreign substances. Gold is “**pure**” when there are no other metals or minerals mixed in with it. Synonyms for this side of purity include: *genuine, intact, 100%, unadulterated, unbroken, uncorrupted, undivided, unmixed, and whole.*

So we can legitimately reword this phrase as “**Blessed are the spotless and the undivided,**” etc.

- But Christ Jesus does not stop there. He says, “**Blessed are the pure in heart.**”

Ancient Jews understood physiology well enough to know the heart is the central vital organ. However, that sense of the word appears only twice in the N.T.

📖 Every other reference to the “**heart**” indicates: the center of feelings, desires and passions; the base of thought and understanding; the seat of the will; the root of spiritual life that determines moral conduct.

In The Applause of Heaven Max Lucado says the heart is “**the totality of the inner person, the seat of character, a freeway cloverleaf where all emotions and prejudices and wisdom converge. It is a switch house that receives freight cars loaded with moods, emotions, and convictions and puts them on the right track.**”

“**Blessed are**” those whose inner selves are unsoiled by sin and undivided in allegiance to God!

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

① To “**see God**” is to be admitted into God’s presence.

- Psalm 24:3-4 ~ “**Who may ascend the mountain of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place? Those who have clean hands and a pure heart...**”

② And to “**see God**” is to perceive God’s glory.

- Isaiah 6:1-3 ~ “**I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs...And they were calling to one another: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.”**”

③ To “**see God**” is to experience His goodness.

- Psalm 27:9, 13 ~ “**Do not hide your face from me ...I remain confident of this: I will see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.**”

- Each meaning has a *now* and a *not yet* dimension: Our present vision is just as *real* as our future vision (“**the pure in heart**” access God’s presence, perceive His glory and experience His goodness now); still, our vision of God in eternity will be immeasurably clearer, more tangible, and more potent than it is today.

- “**For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face**” (First Corinthians 13:12). And “**we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure**” (First John 3:2-3).

- ☀ “**Blessed are**” those whose total inner selves are unsoiled by sin and undivided in their allegiance to God, for they will be admitted into God’s presence, perceive God’s glory, and experience God’s goodness.

Intimacy with God as we embody spiritual authenticity and cleanness is, arguably, the crux of the

Beatitudes and the ultimate objective of Kingdom citizenship.

Two essential observations:

✦ 1<sup>st</sup>, Purity of heart grows from the inside out. We sometimes speak and behave as though inward purity is achieved through outward morality. It is not.

If it were, the Pharisees would have had the purest hearts in the 1<sup>st</sup> century. They were the “go to” guys for good works. They set the gold standard for public ethics and obedience to the biblical law.

□ Yet in Matthew 23:25-28 Jesus denounces them in scathing terms ~

**“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside...and then the outside also will be clean.**

**“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You look like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean....”**

External morality is essential as a means of glorifying God and blessing the world – but it is always the fruit of internal purity, never the cause.

✦ 2<sup>nd</sup>, Purity of heart is a collaboration between God and us.

No human is able to achieve spiritual authenticity and cleanness by effort or knowledge. It starts with Christ’s work on the cross, is energized by the HS, is guided by Scripture, shaped by the Father’s providential acts, and

rounded-out by the ministry of Christ’s Body (the Church). A pure heart begins and ends with Holy God.

Nevertheless, it will not happen without our cooperation. We cannot routinely disregard the Bible, omit prayer, skip corporate worship, isolate ourselves from the fellowship, or feed our minds on the things of this world and, at the same time, grow in authenticity and cleanness.

☑ Paul Thigpen writes *{Discipleship Journal, Issue 138}*:

**Sin has blinded us, leaving our spiritual eyes swollen shut. Unable to see God, we grope in the darkness, searching desperately for someone or something to make us happy...our heart is splintered and scattered. We run to and fro. Gathering first this trinket, then that one, dropping both for the next shiny one we spy... the result is a civil war of the soul. All the while the Father stands close by, waiting for us to turn around and run into His arms...if our vision of God is to grow wider, clearer, and brighter, our will must be united in a single focus on Him and an overriding desire to know and love him.**

□ Philippians 2:12-13 is helpful in summarizing this observation: **“Continue to work out your salvation [we could substitute “purity”] with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.”**

Matthew 5:8 ~ **“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.” “Wonderful news for the pure in heart! You will see God.”**

This is the Word of the Lord!