

## Beatitudes 6: HAVING A PURE HEART

Psalm 24:1-6, Matthew 5:3-8 [MW17-26]

Sermon preached by Rev Wayne Thornton at Mangawhai and Wellsford, Sunday 27 August 2017

*[Just a note about the PowerPoint slides this week. During my sermon there will be some slides – these are not directly from what I am saying but are quotes/thoughts to accompany and amplify; to give you something else to focus on, to reflect on] [Slide 1 displayed from beginning]*

When I was at university one of my majors was Philosophy

- and as part of that I did two years of “Ethics” which I really enjoyed about how and why people act and make decisions about how people and societies order themselves about good and bad, right and wrong and how you work that out ... [Slide 2]
- one of the things that came up over and over again and caused lots of discussion and debate is that there seemed to be no such thing as a completely independent action
- every decision a person makes, every action someone takes inevitably has some element of self-interest
- it seemed nothing could ever be free of personal considerations

Or as that familiar saying goes: “there's no such thing as a free lunch”

- I like another way of saying that, with the initials “N. S. A” which stands for ... “No Strings Attached”!
- in all my ethics studies the conclusion seemed to be that no action no matter how well-intended, noble, beneficial, kind, generous was free of “strings”
- or to put it another way, there were never unmixed motives no one in history had motives that were unsullied that were, to use the word from this week's Beatitude: “pure”

*God blesses those people whose hearts are pure. They will see him!*

This Beatitude asks us, challenges us, to stop, think and examine ourselves

- when people look at us, what do they see?
- when people look at our lives, what do they see?

When personal computers were starting to become more common and user-friendly

- there was a saying used to describe some new programmes again it used initials and became a 'new word', you may have come across it WYSIWYG, said wizziwig = “what you see is what you get”
- what is on the computer screen corresponds pretty much to the appearance of the finished display or printed product without the user having to know fancy programming or layout commands
- you arrange it on the screen and that is how it will print out what you see is what you get [Slide 3]

WYSIWIG!

- I think that is just what Jesus is on about in Matthew 5:8 that first-off what people see in our behaviour has to line up with how we are inside
- that how we are inside is to be reflected on the outside that everything matches and is consistent

John Stott writes about it like this:

How few of us live one life and live it in the open! We are tempted to wear a different mask and play a different role according to each occasion. This is not reality but play-acting, which is the essence of hypocrisy. Some people weave around them such a tissue of lies they can no longer tell which part of them is real and which is make-believe. Alone among all people Jesus Christ was absolutely pure in heart, being entirely guileless.

My Ethics classes were wrong [Slide 4]

- there is one in history whose motives are unmixed and unsullied: alone among all people Jesus Christ was absolutely pure in heart, being entirely guileless

How we are inside is to show in who we are and what we do

- and Jesus tells us how we are to be inside  
how are we to be inside? ... Pure
- in Hebrew psychology, the heart is the centre of the person  
the seat of personal will, feeling, and thinking
- Blessed are the pure in *heart*, Jesus said  
Blessed are those who are pure at the centre of their beings

This includes being morally and inwardly right

- and John Stott says it goes even further, having to do with our relationships  
that this being pure is 'single-mindedness', having a single heart
- the pure in heart have their whole lives, public and private  
transparent before others
- their very heart, including their thoughts and motives, is pure  
and unmixed with anything devious, ulterior or base

The Greek word for 'pure' is 'katharos', which has three main meanings [Slide 5]

- originally it meant simply 'clean'  
and could be used of dirty clothes which have been washed clean
- it was also used for corn which has been sifted of all chaff  
and similarly it was used of an army which had been purged of all  
discontented, cowardly, unwilling and inefficient soldiers  
to become a force composed solely of first class fighters
- in connection with another word 'akeratos' it has to do with  
milk or wine unadulterated with water, or metal with no tinge of alloy
- which gives the meaning: unmixed, unadulterated, unalloyed  
and it is this that makes it such a demanding Beatitude:  
*Blessed is the one whose motives are always entirely unmixed,  
for that one shall see God*

On the other hand, my Ethics classes were right

- it is very seldom that we do even our finest actions from totally selfless motives  
if we give generously to a particular cause, there could be in the depths of our hearts  
some contentment in basking in the sunshine of our own self-approval  
some pleasure in the praise and thanks and credit we will receive
- if we do a fine thing, which demands some kind of sacrifice  
we may not be totally free of the feeling or hope  
people will see something heroic in us, perhaps even something of the martyr

William Barclay includes this example:

Even a preacher at his most sincere is not altogether free from the danger of self-satisfaction at having preached a good sermon. Was it not John Bunyan who was once told by someone that he had preached well that day, and who answered sadly, "The devil already told me that as I was coming down the pulpit steps"?

This Beatitude demands from us very exacting self-examination [Slide 6]

- is our work done from motives of service or motives of pay?
- is our service given from selfless motives or motives of self-display
- is our church attendance an attempt to meet God
- or is it something we think we ought to do?

Barclay goes on to say:

To examine one's own motives is a daunting and shaming thing, for there are few things in this world that even the best of us do with completely unmixed motives

However, when we take up the challenge of Matthew 5:8 something happens

- something happens for us, in us, to us?  
and something happens in our world
- us having a pure heart and always being aware of our motives  
allows the kingdom of God to enter into our world

I came across this which I think puts it rather well:

Rivers gain more attention than the little streams that create them. You can name the great rivers of the world but you cannot name their tributaries. However, without the tributaries there would be no river. It must be remembered, too, that the smaller streams, while less well known, are purer and are found on a higher elevation. Some of our lives are tributary lives. It is our role to provide the pure water from the higher elevation that enables another to be a mighty river of power and influence.

That is what happens in our world

- what happens for us, in us, to us is we are able to see God  
when we make the effort to examine ourselves and our motives  
and keep them pure, single-minded and single-hearted
- we are able to see God in a way we were not able to before  
our relationship with God deepens and we are just able to see more

It is like going out on a clear night and looking up at the sky

- there are literally thousands of pinpoints of light  
it is breathtakingly beautiful and a sight to behold, but that is all
- taking up the challenge of Matthew 5:8 means in that same sky  
we become like an astronomer calling planets, stars, constellations by name  
moving among them as friends
- or like a navigator who from that same night sky finds the means  
to bring a ship across the trackless seas to the desired haven [Slide 7]

The Message puts it like this:

*You're blessed when you get your inside world – your mind and heart put right.  
Then you can see God in the outside world.*

The 'take-home thought', your homework this week is

- to look in the mirror  
when you are shaving, brushing your hair, applying lipstick, adjusting clothes  
look deep into your own eyes
- when you consider the day ahead  
what you are planning to do, the people you will meet  
all that you will think, and say and do
- examine your motives and your sincerity

Psalm 24 says [Slide 8]

*Who may climb the Lord's hill or stand in his holy temple?*

*Only those who do right for the right reasons ...*

There, in front of the mirror, at the beginning of your day

- resolve to do the right thing for the right reason  
resolve to be the person you are called to be

Most of us look pretty good on the outside

- most of us make a good show in public  
I think this Beatitude in Matthew 5:8 challenges us to get ourselves in balance
- to on the one hand be that well-behaved person we are on the outside  
on the inside
- and on the other hand to be 'pure' on the inside  
and let it show on the outside
- to be the outside person inside; and the inside person outside

And just how are we to do that this might help:

If a farmer doesn't plant seeds, he will never harvest a crop. It doesn't matter how weed-free his ground is; he must also plant and cultivate good seed. In the same way, we can only reap a harvest of purity and integrity by planting the good seed of God's Word into our lives. This is more than merely reading the Bible. This is allowing the Holy Spirit to plant the truths of Scripture deep into our hearts and minds through consistent Bible reading and memorization, meditation and prayer. To be effective, and to remain pure, truth must be planted in our hearts daily.

This will definitely help!

- I looked up "pure" in a collection of stories, quotations and sayings I have on CD  
and this is one of the things that was highlighted
- from the *Book of Common Prayer*, originally written by Thomas Cranmer in 1558  
it is the Confession
- confession, forgiveness, absolution  
how we are able to be 'pure in heart' and get back to being 'pure in heart'
- the words are rather old-fashioned, and for some unfamiliar  
however I believe they lead us to a good place
- so I am proposing to conclude by using the invitation  
then for us all to say the words of confession  
and receive absolution  
that we may be pure in heart

[Slide 9+]

Priest:

Dearly beloved brethren, I pray and beseech you, as many as be here present, to accompany me with a pure heart and humble voice unto the throne of the heavenly grace, saying after me:

Priest and People:

Almighty and most merciful Father, we have erred and strayed from thy ways, like lost sheep. We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts. We have offended against thy holy laws. We have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and we have done those things which we ought not to have done, and there is no health in us. But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us miserable offenders. Spare thou them, O God, which confess their faults. Restore thou them that be penitent, according to thy promises declared unto mankind, in Christ Jesus our Lord. And grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake, that we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life, to the glory of thy holy name. Amen.

Priest:

May the Almighty and merciful Lord grant unto us pardon and remission of all our sins, that our life hereafter may be pure and holy; so that at the last we may come to his eternal joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

## LIST OF POWERPOINT SLIDES

Slide 1:

Blessed are the pure in heart...

Slide 2:

It matters not what you do-- Make a nation or a shoe; For he who does an honest thing In God's pure sight is ranked a king. John Parnell

Slide 3:

No one knows of your honesty and sincerity unless you give out some samples.

Slide 4:

The secret of success is sincerity. Once you can fake that you've got it made.

Slide 5:

More American homes are painted white than any other color. When paint companies were asked why, they gave these reasons: You may make a mistake with the shade of some other color but white can never be a disaster. White will never go out of style. White has many pleasant associations: cleanliness, peace, strength, purity.

Slide 6:

Religion does not lie open to all the eyes of men. Observed duties maintain our credit, but secret duties maintain our life.

Slide 7:

We are afraid that heaven is a bribe, and that if we make it our goal we shall no longer be disinterested. It is not so. Heaven offers nothing that a mercenary soul can desire. It is safe to tell the pure in heart that they shall see God, for only the pure in heart want to. C. S. Lewis in The Problem of Pain.

Slide 8:

Pure living is a lifestyle not a onetime event

Slide 9+:

Confession, Absolution ...