

**Text: Matthew 5:8 (Pew Bible pg.958)**

**Title: “Experiencing God”**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Open your Bibles again this morning to Matthew 5. My prayer is that our study in the Beatitudes has helped us sit at the feet of Jesus to learn how to follow Him into the Kingdom of God. Once again, let's stand as I read them all together. Perhaps you're already getting to a place where you have them memorized. Read Matthew 5:1-12. “They will see God...” Whether we know it or not, that is the deepest longing in our hearts ... to see ... to know ... to experience God.” As you're seated please keep your Bibles open to Matthew 5:8.

**Matthew 5:8 - Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.**

**ILLUSTRATION** - The Beatitudes are "heavy." If I handed you a beach ball, then handed you a bowling ball, you would immediately notice that though they are about the same size, one has a greater mass to it; one weighs more than the other. Well, each of these beatitudes has "mass." That is certainly true of this sixth radical statement of Jesus. In fact we see this all the way through the Sermon on the Mount. We're told by Matthew that when Jesus finished teaching that the people were amazed at Jesus' teaching because He spoke with such authority.

Many NT scholars believe that the sixth beatitude is the climax of this string of eight radical statements of Jesus ... the central truth toward which the previous five have been building, and from which the following two flow. For in this powerful statement Jesus describes two astonishing miracles:

**ASTONISHING MIRACLE #1 – A person can actually be pure in heart.**

**Matthew 5:8 - Blessed are the pure in heart...**

This is the aim of the Christ-life ... to bring people to a place of being pure in heart. Now all the Beatitudes deal with the heart, but the sixth beatitude really does get to the heart of the matter.

Jesus didn't come to make people a little more moral and religious. His vision for us is much deeper than that. Later in the Gospel of Matthew Jesus rebukes the religionists of his day and compared them to dirty dishes:

**Matthew 23:25 - “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.**

When Jesus speaks of the "heart" He uses the Greek word *kardia* from which we get our word “cardiac” and other similar terms. But the heart Jesus speaks of here is not the physical pump that beats away inside your chest right now. When the Bible speaks of the heart it includes thoughts, our attitudes, our feelings, our motives and our will. It's the total of your interior life. It's the control center of your life.

Your heart will be reflected in your exterior life. So you can see that there is no possibility of outward change without inward change. The heart is what you are, in the secrecy of your thoughts and feelings, the place that no one knows but God. And what you *there* matters as much to God as what you are on the outside. The Bible says that man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart (1 Samuel 16:7).

**Matthew 15:19 - For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.**

It's important to understand that this is the vision God had for us when He sent His Son to the cross:

**Titus 2:14 – (Christ) gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.**

And for God to purify for Himself a pure people, He's going to have to first purify hearts. So you see this is ...

### **SOMETHING GOD DOES:**

**Titus 2:14a - who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own...**

Someone has said that "Jesus did not come into the world simply because we have some bad habits that need to be broken. He came into the world because we have such dirty hearts that need to be purified."

**ILLUSTRATION** – Suppose your refrigerator goes out while you're out of town. You come home and there's this horrible odor that hits you in the face as you walk in the door ... the odor of rotting meat and left-overs in your refrigerator. What do you do? Spray some deodorizer in the kitchen? Repaint the refrigerator? Redecorate the kitchen? New flooring? New cabinets? You can do all that and things will still stink, because you've not gotten to the heart of the problem.

And a pure heart is possible only through what Christ did on the Cross of Calvary. Don't think you can do this for yourself. Christ had to first come to redeem us and to purify us. And that's not just talking about forgiveness. Certainly the blood of Christ takes care of the *stains* of sin. But it also frees us from the *chains* of sin so that we are free to live a new life.

When you think about all the problems that exist in our world, and in our homes, and in our lives, it all boils down to heart problems. I wholeheartedly applaud every effort our state legislature has made to establish laws that protect unborn babies and their mothers. We must never grow weary in that battle. But the real battle will not be won in Austin or in Washington DC. The real battlefield is the human heart ... and only Christ can change the human heart.

And that's why our work as the Church is so important as we proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ ... that Jesus lived, died and rose again to change the human heart. And when a person puts their trust in Christ the Bible says that they are born again. They become a new person.

God gives them a new heart that continues to grow to touch every aspect of their lives. Today if you know you're life is a mess ... if you are struggling with immorality or addiction or greed or a hateful spirit ... you can't change until Christ comes and gives you a new heart. That can happen even today as you turn to Christ and put your trust in Him, turning from your sin and completely trusting Christ to save you. And He will give you a new heart and a new life.

## **SOMETHING GOD DOES THAT PRODUCES SOMETHING WE DO:**

**Titus 2:14 - who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.**

“Eager to do what is good...” Wouldn't you love to be that way ... eager to do what is good ... not reluctant, but eager? When God does the work of redemption in our lives He gives us a willing heart. God is at work in you both to *will* and to *do* His good pleasure.

So that tells me that there's something about the heart that only God can change, but then I am responsible for directing my heart. The Bible says to guard your heart for out of it flows all the issues of life. As we look at the whole scope of the Bible we come to understand what Jesus means when He talks about being pure in heart.

- **Undivided loyalty**

**Matthew 22:37 - Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”**

**ILLUSTRATION** – Young people, how many of you want to marry someone who says to you: "You know I love you, but I love someone else also. Can't I love you on the weekends, and love this other person on weekdays?" You wouldn't want that, and God doesn't either. To be pure in heart means to have an undivided loyalty to God ... loving God with *all* your heart ... *all* your soul ... *all* your mind.

- **Undiluted motives**

"Pure" means undiluted or unmixed. Pure gold is gold without impurities. How many times do we do things because we want to please God, but deep down inside we know we also want people to notice that we're doing it? A pure heart does it all for the glory of God and the good of others.

- **Uncompromised honesty**

**Psalm 51:6 - Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place.**

A pure heart is a heart that has nothing to do with falsehood. It is truthful and free of deceitfulness. Lies that come out of our lips come from a lying heart. And this is where

hypocrisy comes in: praying things we don't mean, singing things we don't mean, pretending to do what we don't do, and pretending to be something we are not.

- **United decision-making**

**Psalm 86:11 - Teach me your way, O LORD, and I will walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name.**

That psalm is a prayer: “Lord, make my heart one. Make it single, let it be one, let it be sincere, let it be entirely free of hypocrisy.”

So to be pure in heart means to pursue God with absolute single-mindedness. Purity of heart is to will that one thing ... the glory of God.

**EXAMPLE:** As I thought about how to animate this for you, I couldn't use a human example because we have no way of knowing what's in another person's heart. But then again, why would we need any other example than Jesus Himself. He is completely God; but He is completely man as well. I challenge you to read the Gospels and be amazed at the pure heart of Jesus. His *undivided loyalty* to the Father led Him to lay down His life to do His Father's will. His *undiluted motives* led him to face the cross with the pure motive of love for His Father and for us. His *uncompromised honesty* led him to speak and live the truth, without a trace of hypocrisy. His *united decision-making* caused Jesus to live with such integrity that no one could ever find fault with Him.

So the only way to truly experience God the way we all want and need to is to pursue a pure heart before God and before others. But there's another astonishing miracle in this statement:

**ASTONISHING MIRACLE #2 – A person can actually see God.**

**Matthew 5:8 - Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.**

Now the word “see” which Jesus uses here means to physically see something or someone. Now in this life we cannot see God the Father. Jesus said...

**John 1:18 - No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known.**

So God has revealed Himself, made Himself known, through His Son Jesus Christ.

**John 14:9b - Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.**

But seeing God in Christ is more than just physically seeing Him. When Jesus talks here about the pure in heart seeing God He's talking about the ability...

- **To enter into the presence of God**

**ILLUSTRATION** – When you call your doctor’s office and ask, “Can I see Dr. Shelton today?” you don’t mean, “Can I see him from a distance,” or, “can I see a picture of him?” No, you mean, “Can I have an appointment to be in his presence so he can help me?”

And because of what Christ did on the Cross we can enter the presence of God to talk with Him and have a relationship with Him. We can see God in that we can enter His presence where before our sin separated us from God. And that’s true in a general sense when we put our trust in Christ. But practically speaking, as believers, it is only when our heart is as pure as we know how to make it that we can live every day in the very powerful realization that we are in His presence.

But also, when our hearts are pure and to see God means...

- To be **enthralled** by the presence of God

**ILLUSTRATION** – On a few occasions I’ve had the opportunity to visit the Tower of London, where there is probably the greatest concentration of exquisite and expensive jewels in the world. There are Crown Jewels that belong to the royalty of England. It may be the greatest displays of human glory anywhere in the world. My first visit to the Tower of London was when I was about 10 or 11 years old. The Tower of London is also a great museum with a torture chamber, and I was more enthralled with that than I was the glory of the Crown Jewels. But later in life when I’ve had the opportunity to go to the Tower I have a deeper appreciation for the splendor of the jewels that our displayed there. You see as a boy I could enter the presence of the jewels, but as I matured I was enthralled in the presence of the jewels.

And the same thing is true with “seeing God.” It’s one thing to be in His presence ... it’s another thing to be awestruck in His presence ... amazed and bedazzled by His glory.

- To **enjoy** the presence of God

**ILLUSTRATION** - Your heart is lens through which you see God. I’m one of those people who cannot see well without some artificial help like glasses. The problem with glasses, as many of you know, is that they can get dirty and scratched. And when that happens you don’t see things clearly. You can’t really see the beauty of another person’s eyes, or the beauty of a flower, or the beauty of a glorious sunset. But when you take off your glasses and clean the lenses, those things become possible for you. You enjoy life so much more.

**Psalm 16:11 - You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.**

**WE EXPERIENCE THIS HERE/NOW** - We see God in nature. We see God in history revealed in the Bible. We see God in the person of Jesus Christ. We see God in the circumstances of our lives. We see His hand at work all around us every day. We can know and sense His presence with us through the Holy Spirit who lives within us as believers. Job saw God only after he had been purified through suffering and affliction.

**Job 42:5 - My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you.**

**WE WILL EXPERIENCE THIS THERE/THEN** - Paul said, "Now we see through a glass dimly. Then we shall see face to face." This has to be one of the most amazing thoughts we could ever have. You and I as imperfect and weak as we are, with all of our problems and our pressures, with all of our sins and shortcomings, one day we will see God *face to face*. Just think about it: You and I are going to enjoy God, and spend our eternity in His glorious and eternal presence. It's incredibly hard for us to even imagine what that will be like. Dear child of God, you are going to see God. Can you believe it?

**Revelation 22:4 - They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.**

**Revelation 22:5 - There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.**

There will come a day when God himself will dwell among us. Now we see reflections of His glory in lightning, mountain beauty, raging oceans or the stars in the nighttime sky. But one day when we are in heaven our experience of him will be direct. His glory will be the very light in which we live in heaven and we will *see* the beauty of his holiness like we never imagined.

**ILLUSTRATION** - It will be the difference between standing outside at night and looking at the reflection of the sun on the surface of the moon, and standing outside in the day with the full rays of the sun beaming down on you.

**ILLUSTRATION** – It will be difference between talking to your loved one by video on Skype, and walking through the door and seeing their face and embracing them.

Loved ones, this is our destiny. This is where we are going and what we will be when we get there.

**1 John 3:2 - Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.**

**1 John 3:3 - Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.**