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

**Prayer:** Father, our prayer today is that we would be transformed by your Spirit working in us through your Word. May it lead us to repentance. May it lead us to reflection and examination. May it lead to us worshipping your Son, Jesus Christ. Our wants and needs are found in you. May we understand what purity of heart means for us. May our grasp of your holiness grow. We pray this in Jesus’ Name. Amen.

Illustration: A few months ago I got asked to preach on the Beatitudes, I got excited. But then when I saw that it was about “blessed are the pure in heart” I was like…. “Oh…ok. Sure” With a bit of nervousness. I’ll be honest. When approached with this subject, of purity and having a pure heart, my initial thought was: “Am I qualified to speak on this?” How about asking somebody that has a reputation of integrity and faithfulness, like Pastor Fred? Or hey, Pastor Jason-you have experience as a preacher, a father, a good husband-how about you do it? I don’t feel that a guy in his 20s starting off in ministry would be qualified to speak on such a heavy issue. I mean, yeah, I’m a good guy,-but pure of heart? Wow-don’t I need some kind of long history of showing uprightness, moral credibility and outstanding virtue? These are the thoughts that ran through my head.

Do any of you feel like that today? Pure in heart. Perhaps some of you feel like this is the last thing that you’d describe your devotional life, your relationships, your private life. What do you think of when this passage was read? Blessed are those whose hearts are pure-for they will see God. Maybe some of you were a bit guilted, thinking- “Oh no, this is gonna be another sermon on sexual purity and how porn and marital infidelity are ruining the Church…” or “I’ve heard this before, be pure before God-Just doesn’t work for me. Why even bother to try to be pure?” And then, some of you- “My heart is fine, it’s beating fine, I don’t see anything wrong with it-let’s just get to the application so you tell me what I need to do.” Whatever your response might be, I believe that what God’s Word has to say about this topic, is vital to our growing walks. Do you desire a growing walk with God today? Our prayer is that if you do, then that your heart would long for this purity more today. And maybe if we don’t desire this growth with God, that our hearts would certainly be softened by His truth today.

We have been walking through the different beatitudes each week. The beatitudes show who we already are, as a Christian. So when it says “blessed are those who are meek” or “blessed are those who are pure in heart”, it is not talking about an impossible standard we could never achieve. Nor is it talking about something we have to work toward on our own strength. Neither get it right. The beatitudes is speaking on who we already are, transformed by Christ and by the power of His Holy Spirit, new beings who exhibit a purity of heart and a hungering for righteousness and meekness. So you can’t pick and choose these beatitudes, it encompasses what the Christian is and our DNA.

But we don’t always act like who we are supposed to be. We are still sinners saved by grace. And often we forget that this is who we are and we get led astray. The hope is that you would be reminded of who you are and whose you are. That you would walk not by your own strength but by Christ’s indwelling power, walk as His child. To strive for this purity of heart. To recognize it is already yours, Christian. To walk in victory.

And for those of you who are not yet a follower of Christ we hope that you would hear the words of this good Book. And see the good life and infinite grace that our God Jesus Christ has to offer you. We hope you will also seek with us this purity of heart, not in your own strength. But by the recognition that we all need the Savior to heal our hearts and give a new heart.

And with that, let’s cover a few questions.

What is purity?

And we talk not just of physical purity, but of a purity that goes deep within, which leads to:

Why do we talk about the heart?

And how does a pure heart relate to our seeing God, which leads to our third question of:

How large is your vision of God?

**So let’s dive into the first question. What is purity?**

Ephesians 5:3 says that “But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people” We are commanded to seek this purity. Purity means no defilement-- Purity in our thought life. Purity in our actions. Purity even in our words. And not just sexual sins, for that’s the most obvious ways we talk of purity. Impurity in our finances, in our relationships, in our speech, even in our thoughts. I’m sure we have all been tempted to be impure, and given into impure thought or action, perhaps some of us are even addicted to habitual sins that affect our relationships and in our private life.

When we say something or somebody is pure, what do we mean? We might say that a baby is pure and innocent, or maybe a really good tasting glass of water they’ll say, that’s really pure, unfiltered taste. We know there is nothing that corrupts it, no blemish or something to ruin it. Sometimes we say that was “pure joy” or “pure excitement” to show how amazing or uninterrupted it was, without flaws to get in the way.

 Honestly, impurity is easier to describe than purity. Because purity is so foreign to us. We know what it looks like when a man cheats on his wife, when an employee swindles the company of money, when a student is looking at sexual images online in addiction, when a woman is gossiping about her co workers, when pastors lie about their lives so that they look like they’re healthier spiritually than they really are.

Impurity is anything that has a defect, something not so clean anymore. Why is it that God desires a people of pure hearts? God is the most perfect being of all-He is Holy, set apart, He is righteous, His motivations are pure. He is the essence of good. So you take a perfect God, and what does He do? He says that He wants a relationship with a people. A people that are imperfect, that are impure. He desires an intimate connection with us. But because our desires, our hearts are not so clean, we can’t have this relationship with Him on our own power.

Any of you big sushi fans? I watched this documentary on Netflix, “Jiro dreams of Sushi”. It tells the story of this old sushi chef master in Japan, named Jiro. His quest in life is to make the perfect sushi-the combination of the freshest of ingredients. He wants the best fish, the best kind of rice, and only the absolute best chefs to work in his kitchen. And watching it, it was quite beautiful. Something about the fact that he could take such pleasure in this simple yet complicated craft of combining raw fish with rice and soy sauce and wasabi. If there were ever a pure and perfect sushi, I think this Jiro guy would come pretty close to meeting the standard.

Well, for us-there is also a standard. There is a standard of holiness, a right conduct, a purity we are called to maintain and strive for. A perfection that none of us could ever achieve. And despite me not meeting that standard, God desires for me to know Him and be known by Him. He is not a strict teacher or a mean parent saying- “Hey, here’s the bar, the standard. You gotta meet it before you can talk to me.” No, in fact He is the opposite. He wanted to get to know people who fell so low, He wanted to provide for us, an impure people, a way to be with Him in the closest relationship of all. And you know what? On my own strength, I could never have that for the thoughts and actions from this body-it is not pure.

God desires purity-but not just any kind of purity, not purity of hands or that of mere conduct, but purity of something deeper, in the heart-

**Next, let’s talk about the heart**. What is so special about the heart? The Greek word for heart, Kardia, is mentioned over 800 times in scripture. Not the one that beats physically. But it is central, for Jesus says out of the heart many things overflow.

In Matthew 15, there are the Pharisees, a religious group who are all about doing good. They say the right things, they give money, they even clean their hands and wash so that they would physically be clean. And they are asking Jesus why his disciples don’t clean themselves up through washing before a meal. Jesus responds in Matthew 15:17- “Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and is expelled? But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a person, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone.” Jesus makes it clear -just because what we do on the outside is clean, don’t mean that our insides are so good.

I mean the Pharisees helped the poor, went to pray, read their Bibles, fasted-in many ways, they were very disciplined and religious. But the act of doing these things, none of this meant that they had a clean heart. Jesus said that from our hearts flow out all sorts of evils. Maybe if it were just going to Sunday School and reading our Bibles, tithing and serving, we could pass this test. But Jesus looks deeper than that. He looks at our actual heart, where our desires flow from. You can’t fake who you are. You just can’t.

What about us? What about you? What about me? I mean, I wouldn’t have motivations that are self seeking instead of others caring. I would never desire more for approval from people rather than loving on them. I mean how could I, I’m a minister, a Christian, pay my taxes, I wouldn’t dare use people so I could feel better about myself? And how could anybody ever accuse of me that I were playing the comparison game, being envious of those in life situations seemingly better than mine? Come on guys, my heart is clean. Isn't yours? We’re ok. Nothing to hide. Nothing to share. Nothing to be honest or transparent about. But is that me being honest?

So a few times a month, I will make a trip to Dallas, usually on a Sunday late afternoon, to visit my finance Gracia. And I stay only for about a few hours on Sunday and get back Monday, usually my day off from work. And it’s romantic, and you might say “Wow, Eun Soo sacrifices a lot, he’s gonna make a good husband someday.” or “man, that is really sweet. I’ll have to give him some gift cards to Mcdonalds next time so he can get some on his drive to Dallas”. And hey-thanks for thinking that if you did. And thanks for the gift card. Just kidding! But I sometimes fool myself in thinking I am a sacrificial romantic guy. From the outside, I am acting kind and romantic, sweet and caring.

But, if I’m being honest, I want people to approve of me. I like being the center of attention. I wish people would notice me, and say good things about me. And so what happens sometimes when I go to Dallas is that instead of caring for Gracia and her needs, “hey babe, can I help with wedding planning? Hey can I get you some coffee as you work on your Greek homework?” I’ll try to visit my old friends and spend time with them so I’ll get my approval tank filled up. It’s not a bad thing having friends, but I notice how impure my motivations can be. I say I’m being a sacrificial man, but really, sometimes I care more about how much time I’m getting doing the things I want in Dallas rather than looking our for Gracia’s needs. I’m not considering that she might want some time with me when I’m trying to be the center of attention in all these social events.

Not to beat on myself, because I think we all have mixed motives, but I was just thinking how even in me doing something good, I can have really self seeking motives. I still love Gracia, but deep down I have a deeper love for myself. Maybe I want that time in Dallas to be more about me getting comforts and attention than caring for her needs. Hard to admit, but if I don’t say it, how will I ever get over it? How about you? Do you have any blind spots to your own heart? I mean the Scriptures clearly says that the heart is deceitful.

In the Bible, the heart is the center for what we do. The reason why we would pursue something, that motive behind everything. When we say, “man, she has a good heart”, we mean that her desires are noble and pure. 2 Chronicles 16:9 states “For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.” From the Old Testament to the new, this theme is repeated. Who can truly have this clean heart? Pure in heart before God-is that even possible?

I’ve been reading this book “A Dangerous Calling” by Paul Tripp; it’s a book primarily for pastors and seminarians, but honestly, it you are a leader, if you have desire to grow and walk in Christ, I encourage you to go and get this book.

It talks about how we have deceived ourselves. He refers to those of us who intellectually knows so much theology and all the right answers. We talk a good game, maybe even play a good game by serving and leading. But with our swollen heads the risk is having a heart that is shriveled. By us thinking we know everything about this book, we forget to apply it to our hearts. To our desires. To our passions and the essence of who we are. We get blind. Sins become rampant but we check out. We excuse our behavior cuz we think we are doing ok.

It’s one thing to have a heart of impure motives, but once we stop caring about the heart, once we start ignoring our convictions-Then our hearts are prone to being hardened. And Tripp warns us of this danger as well-

“Where we finally end is with a “hardened” heart. What once bothered us doesn’t bother us anymore. What once activated our conscience doesn’t seem to anymore. What we knew was outside of God’s boundaries, and therefore was functionally outside ours, live inside our boundaries, and it doesn’t matter to us anymore. It is a scary place to be. The hard heart is a stony heart. It’s not malleable anymore. It’s hard and resistant to change, no longer tender and responsive to the squeeze of the Spirit. There is evil in our hearts and in the acts of our hands, and we’re okay with it. Could there be a more dangerous place for a believer to be?” (*Dangerous Calling, page 72*)

And he’s speaking to every believer here. He mentions pastors who have fallen to unrepentant sin, how **none** of us in this room are immune to temptation. It’s scary. But it’s reality.Like he said, is there a more dangerous place for us to be? Church, please don’t let your heart go unchecked.

How is your heart today? Let’s do an honest reflection, a real heart check up. Can we say it is pure? What lusts or pride or vanities has it been distracted by? Is your heart malleable and soft, listening to God’s Word? Or has it become a hard heart that doesn’t recognize sin anymore? Living in excuses, living in defensiveness, living alone and hidden from the light of community?

And with all of this, let’s talk about how a pure heart relates to seeing God.

**Vision for God:** What it means to see God-And how large is your vision of God? It says that those and only those whose hearts are pure are able to see God. Why is it that only those whose hearts that are pure be able to see God?

In Isaiah, chapter 6:5- “And I said: “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!” This prophet, Isaiah, realizes how far his own depravity is before the King of Kings. As God comes to Isaiah in this vision, he is ruined. It’s surprising, right? You’d think once somebody saw God, they’d be excited, they’d be leaping for joy. “I just saw God! Yes! He’s amazing! I’m so happy!”

The opposite happens in the Scriptures when people encounter God. Isaiah is miserable, because he, and like us, we, have unclean lips. Not only unclean lips, but unclean motivations, our hearts are depraved. We do not have anything to offer God. We are naked before Him,ashamed if the most perfect Being in the Universe came, our deeds were exposed. Wouldn’t you be trembling? Knowing that this is Holiness, Perfection, the Most Beautiful Being, without beginning or end. And how far you fall short? How much you have disobeyed Him?

In fact, just imagine that you were sitting on a beach, looking at a sunset. It is beautiful, it is glorious. It is so majestic. But imagine if you were actually to touch that sun, where the radiance flowed from. What would happen? Before you could touch it, you would incinerate-you’d be a goner! And the same way with us impure beings before a Holy God-How could we even be in His presence without being destroyed?

So what does it mean, when in this Beatitude, it speaks of seeing God? We can’t see Him face to face, for God is too Holy and He is not a physical being. And even Moses in the Scriptures, a very godly man, didn’t even get a full glimpse of God, He could only see a part of God momentarily, lest he be destroyed for being in His presence would have been too much.

I don’t think it means actually seeing God physically on this earth. I know one day we will see Him for who He is, in the life to come. But what about in the meantime on this earth?

Vision: Well, in the meantime, our vision must grow. Our ability to see God for who He is, not who we want Him to be. We talk about vision statements. Look at Churches, look at Corporations, Businesses. They have a vision statement. What’s your vision for this small group? What’s your vision for this ministry? What’s your vision for this company in the next ten years? When they ask that, they mean to ask where do you see this group or business going? What is your dream? What do you foresee in the future?

What about the vision that matters the most? Our own vision for our God. Do we see Him clearly, for who He is, and not who we want Him to be? Or maybe you have clouded vision. If I take off these glasses, I can make out maybe few blurs and few spots in the audience. I really couldn’t tell where the youth were sitting or where anybody was, they’re just blobs to me.

Likewise, our vision of God can become clouded. We have sin, we have distractions that flow out of our hearts. Our own impurity can blind us from seeing God from who He is. Maybe it’s an unconfessed sin, or a bitterness harboring in the heart. Perhaps it’s an idol you are cherishing without being aware. Is it a person? Is it lust? Pride? Is it an idol of comfort, approval, power, control? Jesus says these flows from the heart. And without the purity of heart, our vision of God diminishes. We see ourselves and are too content with what we see.

Seeing God is a great gift-the vision of God, seeing how majestic and holy and glorious He is-maybe we are too content with the vision of God as somebody who we turn to every now and then, a convenient idea, perhaps your god is not the God of the Bible, it is more just moralism and good feelings and positive thinking. We want to see Him as He is, the most Holy, the most beautiful of Beings, to see Him in the pages of Scripture. To see His hand upon my life. To see His glory in my family and friend’s lives. To see more of His working and be in awe of the miracle of His grace.

When it comes to pure of heart, we try some of our own solutions to the problem:

**Legalism-** Some of us might in our own strength try to fight impurity by what the Pharisees did. By trying harder, by righteous deeds. But let me ask you-how has that worked out for you so far? Have you attained perfection? Are you close? Have you seen God with your own effort and religiousness?

**Lawlessness-**Some others of you will try another approach. Perhaps blinded by sin, perhaps frustrated that you will never be pure, you stop caring. Has your indulgence led to a fuller and richer life? Has it actually led to the life of abundance and lasting joy you hoped for?

So I’ll be honest-this was a hard message to work through. I mean, it was only one verse, but man did God do His convicting work in me. I had to examine, I had to preach to myself. And most of the time, I hated the Eun Soo that this passage was bringing out. I was constantly reminded of my own lusts-my own selfishness, of my pride, my own idols-the fact I want comforts more than I want to serve God’s Church. The fact that I call myself a minister of God’s Word when really, most of the time I love one person, and his name isn’t Jesus. It’s me. I am my biggest hurdle. So what do we do? Do we stay as we are? Do we just end this sermon knowing we are broken, dirty, gross, and just overall impure?

**Lordship-** Let’s talk about Who we need-

Pure? None of us are pure-God is perfect and pure. You know what? I could never ever, ever, meet this standard of purity or perfection-ever. By anything that I try and do. I could never meet that standard of purity on my own.

Heart? None of us have perfect motivation-Our desire should be that to make Him known, and not only that, to know Him better. What is the state of our heart today? Let’s do an honest reflection, a real heart check up. Can we say it is pure? What lusts or pride or vanities has it been distracted by?

Vision? too often our vision is blinded by our own sin and selfishness. None of us are pure enough to see Him clearly for the great God He is. Our vision lacks for we are blinded by so much sin and our distractions.

But here is the good news:

**For the Christian:**

The purity you could not attain, the heart that you lacked, the blindness of vision you suffered from... The fact that you and I could not rescue yourself, the fact that in legalism you never reached the perfect standard. In lawlessness you continually kept disappointing yourself with idols. Despite all of that, despite us being weak and filthy people, impure of heart. But don’t lose heart, Christian. Despite that, Jesus Christ became your righteousness. His purity for your impurity. His true pure motivations, the right desires for your perversions. He gave you a new heart. He made a heart of dead stone into a soft, beating heart of flesh that would be sensitive to God and His people. The fact that we can get a glimpse of God, and that vision increases, is a testimony to Jesus Christ, our righteousness.

If we were to ever touch that glorious sun, we would be destroyed. Even gazing it hurts our eyes. Imagine if you could touch the sun and enjoy it fully because somebody absorbed the deadly heat of the sun for you, and you could look at it without suffering. That is what Jesus did. He suffered in your place. Something I could never do.

Though you would be dead before a pure and righteous God, He spares us and Jesus offers us a new standing, an intimate relationship with the Father and a Spirit to keep pursuing Him as never before.

And through His Grace God empower us by His Spirit so that we can keep fighting. We strive to be pure and see how good God is though how wretched we are. He gave us this new heart. He gives us new eyes, to see the things we couldn’t see before. To see how wicked we are and how loving and merciful He is. To see with a new and fresh perspective, a perspective of grace.

So take heart, know that this purity of heart is already yours. You might stumble and fall. Even this week. To idols and sins and worthless things. But, every time you repent, you turn to God, you recognize how far you fall short, and ask for forgiveness-Jesus Christ has already covered you with his righteousness. He says that your DNA will not change, though you stumble, though you keep failing, you are pure before God. And he calls you, gives you his Spirit so you would grow in purity and your heart would continually be softened as he works in you. So take heart. Repent. Keep pursuing this Wonderful Savior who declares you clean before God.

**For the Non Christian:**

For those of you who do not yet know this Savior, we hope that you will also not lose heart. There is a reason why you are here this morning, and we pray that you would also recognize that- “hey, the things I’ve been pursuing-has that really filled me up?” Or “The guilt and shame that comes with following my own passions-Is it worth it?” Maybe today is the day for you, that God would give you a sense that yeah, you need Him too. Maybe you realize that it’s not enough to just play by the rules, live by moralism, in your own ways. Maybe today is the day you take a step, and recognize that “God-I can’t get this pure heart, my own vision of you is clouded- I need somebody else so that He will give me a new heart.”

Friends, Scripture says that God is a God of grace-while we were sinners, Jesus still died for us. If something is tugging on your heart to pursue this purity of heart, God is listening. Pray that he would forgive you, that you need Jesus Christ to make you pure, for he was the only perfect Savior, the Perfect One who came to die for us and lives for us in our place. Please seek Him out today. We have people that can pray for you after the service who care for you. So seek Him out today. God will forgive, He already reached out to you, are you willing to respond?

Applications: A few practical encouragements for you who desire to live this life of a pure heart, know that it takes not just one, but a community of those who know you.

1. Find people you can confess to and that will regularly call you out
2. Take time to reflect. Journal. Meditate on His Word as you do. Be aware of your own heart. By being honest with yourself, His Spirit will convict and change.
3. Pursue, albeit imperfectly. He knows we will fail. So repent, get up, and keep going. He knows you are imperfect, that is why we have a perfect savior.

**Reflection Questions:** I want to leave you with a few questions this morning, to reflect. Ask yourself, ask God in prayer-ask your closest people around you this week.

-What sins am I not confessing to God or to others?

-What areas could I potentially be blind to? Who can call me out?

-What are the motivations in my heart that could keep me from honoring God?

I think as God searches our hearts, we will be freed as He brings to light our sins, and in turn healing our hearts. Let’s pursue this God, this vision of the majestic Jesus Christ lifted high, and as we grow in repentance, to know his purity cleanses us as well.

**Pray:**