

Blessed Purity

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 17 November 2021

Preacher: Rev. Murdo M Campbell

[0 : 00] Well, if we could, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling this evening, if we could turn back to or turn to Matthew's gospel, Matthew chapter 5.

Matthew chapter 5, we're reading from the beginning. It says there, Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

And then the words of our text this evening. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

And we read just a few moments ago from Psalm 24, which was a psalm written, as we read, by David. And yet Psalm 24 is a messianic psalm which points us and portrays to us the person of Jesus Christ.

In fact, Psalms 22, 23, and 24, they're all messianic psalms. Because in Psalm 22, you have the suffering Savior.

[1 : 44] In Psalm 23, the shepherd's psalm, we have the shepherd's Savior. And in Psalm 24, you have the sovereign Savior. And he's the sovereign Savior because, as we read, the earth belongs unto the Lord and all that it contains.

He's sovereign over the work of creation. But he's also sovereign over the work of salvation. He's the sovereign Savior. But if you noticed, as we were reading through Psalm 24, Psalm 24 is a psalm which asks a lot of questions.

It asks the question, who is the King of glory? Who is this? The Lord of hosts, and none but he, the King of glory, is. But one of the questions which Psalm 24 asks is, Who is the man that shall ascend into the hill of God?

Or who within his holy place shall have a firm abode? And then the answer is given in verse 4 of Psalm 24, Whose hands are clean, whose heart is pure, and unto vanity, who hath not lifted up his soul, nor sworn deceitfully.

And then notice, if you come to our text this evening, what Jesus says in this beatitude. He says, Blessed are the pure in heart. For they shall see God.

[3 : 08] Blessed are the pure in heart. For they shall see God. And Jesus says that in order to see God, we need a pure heart and pure hands.

In order to see God, we need a pure heart and pure hands. And there are two headings this evening. Pure heart and pure hands.

Pure heart and pure hands. So first of all, pure heart. Jesus says, Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Now as you know, Jesus introduces his Sermon on the Mount with these nine beatitudes. There are nine statements of blessing, or nine benedictions of blessedness.

And they appear as the introduction to the Sermon on the Mount, because Jesus seeks to teach us what it means to be a Christian living within the kingdom of heaven.

[4 : 04] He's teaching us what it means to be a child of our heavenly Father. He's teaching us what it means to be a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. But as we said before, in the Beatitudes, Jesus isn't really telling us what we're to do as Christians, or even what we're to be as Christians.

Rather, Jesus is telling us what we already are as Christians. And what we are, as you can see, repeated throughout the Beatitudes, what we are is blessed.

We are blessed as Christians. We're blessed people. As sinners who have submitted and surrendered under the authority of King Jesus, we have come to our King, and we have come kneeling with our heads bowed and our hand outstretched, and we have received from the hand of King Jesus something that we do not deserve.

He has blessed us. He has blessed us. And tonight, as the Lord's people, you are blessed. You are blessed with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ.

But because you're blessed, and I'm blessed, because we're blessed as Christians, as citizens of the kingdom of heaven, as children of our heavenly Father, as disciples of Jesus Christ, the outworking of our blessedness is that we are to possess and practice a Christ-like character, conduct, and conversation.

[5 : 30] And this is important because, as Jesus introduces the Sermon on the Mount, he teaches us that in the kingdom of heaven, we need to be emptied before we are filled. We need to be emptied before we are then filled.

Because, as we've said before, the gospel doesn't just add something to what is already there. No, the gospel empties us. The gospel empties us of all that we are in order to fill us and bless us with all that Jesus is.

That's why Jesus begins the Sermon on the Mount with this first beatitude. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Jesus says, it's only those who are poor in spirit, those who are emptied of pride, and emptied of self, who will receive the kingdom of heaven.

Then he says, blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. It's only those who are emptied, those who are emptied of themselves, those who mourn over their sin, who will find comfort and consolation in the gospel.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. It's only those who are emptied of self-confidence, and self-assurance, who will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

[6 : 53] It's only those, says Jesus, who are declared righteous in Christ, and those who desire the righteousness of Christ, who will ever find satisfaction. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

It's only those who have been shown mercy who will show mercy. It's only those who have been shown mercy who will also show mercy.

And so what Jesus is teaching us, as Christians, as citizens of the kingdom, as children of our heavenly Father, as disciples of Jesus Christ, he's saying that the outworking of our blessedness, the outworking of what we have received from the hand of the King, is that we are to possess, and we are to practice, blessed poverty, blessed mourning, blessed meekness, blessed righteousness, blessed mercy, and then tonight's blessed purity.

Blessed purity. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. And so as those who have been blessed by King Jesus, we're to possess and practice blessed purity.

We're to possess and practice blessed purity. But as we said before, what these benedictions of blessedness, what these beatitudes highlight for us, is that this is a, it's highlighting what a Christ-like character, conduct, and conversation actually looks like.

[8 : 26] Because, you know, when we read through these beatitudes, we have to ask the question, well, who is this describing? Who is being described here, in the beatitudes?

Who is the person who is poor in spirit? Who is it that really mourns over sin? Who is it that is meek? Who is righteous? Who is merciful? Who is pure in heart?

Who is a peacemaker? And of course, the answer is Jesus. The answer is Jesus. Therefore, the beatitudes, they depict and they describe Jesus, because he is the blessed man.

And as the blessed man, he's the only one who can provide and pronounce blessing upon his people. He's the blessed man. And so, when we ask the question of Psalm 24, who is the man that shall ascend into the hill of God?

Or who within his holy place shall have a firm abode? The answer is Jesus. Because his hands are clean. And his heart is pure.

[9 : 33] And he has not lifted up his soul, nor sworn deceitfully. But this is the point. As Christians, as followers of Christ, as citizens of the kingdom, as children of our heavenly Father, as disciples of Jesus Christ, as those who have been blessed by King Jesus, we are those who are now called, commissioned, and commanded in the gospel to imitate and emulate the blessed man, Jesus Christ.

That's our calling. And it's a high calling. My Christian friend, we're to possess and practice blessed purity. We're to have a pure heart.

We're to have a pure heart. Now, I don't know about you, but when I consider this beatitude, and then I look at my own heart, I think, well, my heart is anything but a pure heart.

Because we often feel, don't we? We often feel like Jeremiah, saying, well, my heart is deceitful, above all things, desperately wicked.

We often say with Paul, oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death? We say with Paul, the good that I would, I do not.

[11:04] But the evil that I would not, that is what I keep on doing. And we know what the greatest commandment says. We know the commandment says, love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your mind, all your soul, all your strength, and your neighbor as yourself.

But we feel that we fail so miserably. Don't we? And yet the gospel says to us that our heart is a heart that has been changed.

It's a heart that has been transformed. Because that was the Lord's promise to his people. In Ezekiel, we read those wonderful words where the Lord says, I will give you a new heart and a new spirit I will put within you.

And I will remove the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. My friend, you know, when the Lord began working in your heart and life by his spirit, he changed your hardened heart of stone into a healthy heart of flesh.

He changed it from a heart of stone to a heart of flesh. And in that moment, he did a work of creation. He created within you a clean heart and even a pure heart because he washed us and made us white in the blood of the Lamb.

[12:22] You've been given a new heart. But as you know, my Christian friend, those feelings, those feelings of indebtedness and inadequacy and insufficiency, they never really go away.

They're always with us. We always feel indebted. We always feel inadequate. We always feel insufficient in our Christian life. In fact, that's how Asaph felt as a Christian.

You know, when Asaph wrote Psalm 73, and Psalm 73, it's a wonderful psalm. When Asaph wrote Psalm 73, he said, God is good to Israel. God is good to his people because they're pure in heart. But Asaph himself, like you and I, he felt anything but pure in heart. And Asaph felt anything but pure in heart because he was so envious of his unconverted friend.

Because his unconverted friend seemed so careless and so casual about sin, his unconverted friend seemed to just get on in life and progress and prosper without any real problems.

[13:39] And unlike Asaph, his unconverted friend, he didn't worry about the purity of his heart. He didn't have any feelings of indebtedness to God. The unconverted friend didn't have any feelings of inadequacy or insufficiency as a Christian.

No, his unconverted friend just seemed to have a normal, non-eventful life. And Asaph wondered to himself, he wondered to himself, why do I get so worked up about sin and salvation?

Why do I see the need for repentance and a relationship with God? Why do I see the importance of worship and walking with God? Especially when my unconverted friend, he seems so carefree and casual about sin.

But then Asaph, when you read through the psalm, he says, my feet almost slipped. My feet almost slipped until I went into the sanctuary of God and I discerned their end.

Asaph says, I almost fell away. I almost fell into the trap of thinking that their life is great and my life is difficult. I almost fell away until I saw it from an eternal perspective.

[14:56] Because even though I felt like a poor Christian, says Asaph, I realized that whom have I in the heavens high but the O Lord alone?

And in the earth whom I desire besides thee there is none. My flesh and heart doth faint and fail, but God doth fail me never.

For of my heart God is the strength and portion forever. You know, my friends, sometimes we feel like Asaph. We feel like such a poor Christian.

We feel that we are not pure in heart. But you know, the gospel says to us we have been given a new heart. We have been, God has created within us a clean heart.

We have been blessed with a pure heart. And because we have been blessed with a pure heart, Jesus calls us to have pure hands.

[15:58] Which is what we see secondly. So a pure heart and pure hands. A pure heart and pure hands. So pure hands. Secondly, it says, blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.

I don't know if you've come across Professor David Murray's blog. It's called Head, Heart, Hand. Head, Heart, Hand.

As many of you know, David Murray, or Reverend, or Reverend Dr. David Murray, he used to be the Free Church Continuing Minister in Stornoway. But he's now a pastor in the Presbyterian Church in America.

And he's a professor of Old Testament and Practical Theology in the Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary in the States. But David Murray, he also writes a very interesting, he writes many interesting articles on a blog that are well worth reading.

But I love what is the attractive slogan on his blog, which describes and defines what the Christian life is all about. because he says it is all about informing heads, moving hearts, and directing hands.

[17 : 13] Informing heads, moving hearts, and directing hands. And you know, in many ways, that's what Jesus is teaching us here in this Beatitude. Because Jesus is informing our head, he's giving us information, he's also moving our heart, and he's directing our hands.

He's informing our head, he's moving our heart, he's directing our hands. Jesus is reminding us and reaffirming to us that as citizens of the kingdom, as followers of Christ, as children of our heavenly Father, as disciples of Jesus Christ, as those who have been blessed by King Jesus, we are called, commissioned, and commanded in the Gospel to imitate and emulate the blessed man, Jesus Christ.

We're to possess and practice blessed purity. We're to have a pure head and a pure heart and pure hands. We're to have a pure head, pure heart, and pure hands.

Because as someone once said, our worship of the Lord affects our witness and our work for the Lord. Our worship of the Lord affects our witness and our work and our work for the Lord.

And you know, this is something Jesus repeatedly challenged and confronted the Pharisees about. Because as you know, the Pharisees, well, they were those who thought that they had pure heads and pure hearts and pure hands.

[18 : 45] The Pharisees, they often claimed and they confessed that they possessed and practiced blessed purity. But Jesus, who knows what's in everyone's head, heart, and hands, he called the scribes and Pharisees, he called them out for who they really were.

He called them hypocrites. Because they thought that they honored God with their lips. But as Jesus says, their heart was far from him. They thought that they honored God with their hands, but again, their heart was far from him.

They thought that they honored the Lord by all their outward appearances. But the Lord, as you know, he doesn't look on the outward. He looks on the heart. And as you know, the scribes and Pharisees, they were obsessed with the outward.

The outward. Not only with what they were wearing, but also how they were worshiping. But also when it came to their church practice, whether it was praying or tithing or fasting, Jesus mentions this later in the Sermon on the Mount.

And he mentions it repeatedly. And he says repeatedly, don't be like the Pharisees. Don't be a hypocrite who loves to be seen, practicing their righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them.

[20 : 05] No, Jesus says, the Pharisee, well, they have the reward. They seek the popularity and praise of men. They have that reward.

But you, says Jesus, you do what you do and do it in secret. Whether it's praying or tithing or fasting, you do what you do and you do it in secret and your heavenly Father will reward you openly.

You know, Jesus was very direct and very strong towards the hypocrite, towards the Pharisee.

Because he says time and time again to the scribes and the Pharisees, woe to you hypocrites, for you clean the outside of the cup, but inside it's full of greed and self-indulgence.

You blind Pharisee, Jesus says, first clean the inside of the cup, but the outside may also be clean. Clean the inside so that the outside will be clean.

In other words, purify your heart so that you will have pure hands. Purify your heart so that you will have pure hands because it's not your hands that defile your head and your heart.

[21 : 23] It's your head and your heart that defile your hands. It's not your hands that defile your head and your heart. It's your head and your heart that defiles your hands.

and you know this is this is why Jesus said in the gospel it's not what goes into a person that defiles them but what comes out of them that defiles them Jesus says it's not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person but what comes out of the mouth that's what defiles a person because what comes out of the mouth, says Jesus, proceeds from the heart.

And this defiles a person. For out of the heart, warns Jesus, come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander.

These, says Jesus, are what defile a person. Therefore, it's not your hands that defile your head and your heart.

It's your head and your heart that defile your hands. We need to clean the inside of the cup before the outside can be cleaned.

[22 : 45] It's your worship of the Lord in your heart that affects your witness and your work for the Lord. That's what we're being taught here.

It's your worship of the Lord that affects your witness and your work for the Lord. Of course, this leaves us with the question, well, how do we possess and practice blessed purity?

How do we have a pure head and a pure heart and pure hands? And, you know, the psalmist in Psalm 119, he asked the same question because he asked, how can a young man or a woman keep their life pure?

How can a young man or woman keep their life pure? And the answer the psalmist gives, which is actually the answer and affirmation of the whole of Psalm 119, all 172 verses of Psalm 119, they point to this one answer.

How can a young man or woman keep their life pure? By doing what God's Word commands. By doing what God's Word commands.

[24 : 00] How can we keep our life pure? By living according to God's Word. That's the standard. So how do we possess and practice blessed purity?

How do we have a pure head and a pure heart and pure hands? We fill our head. And we fill our heart. And we fill our hands with the Word of God.

How can a young man or woman keep their life pure? By doing what God's Word commands. We're to fill our head, our heart, and our hands with the Word of God. We're to fill our worship of God with the Word of God so that it will influence and infiltrate into our witness and our work for God.

We're to fill our head by reading and listening to sermons and having fellowship. We're to fill our heart by speaking to one another about the Word of God.

We're to fill our hands with the Word of God by applying it in our Christian witness. And you might think, well, this is very simple and straightforward. But this is the bread and butter of the Gospel.

[25 : 13] This is what we need to be reminded of time and time again. Because if you're anything like me, you look at your heart and you think, well, it's not pure. It's not the way it ought to be.

I need to seek and strive to have a pure heart and pure hands. And you know, this is what the apostles, time and time again, they encouraged and exhorted the church to do.

Peter, in his letter, he said, love one another with a pure heart because you have been born again. Born again of what? Born again of the Word of God, he says, which lives and abides forever.

And Paul, when he wrote to young Timothy, he said to Timothy, he said, be an example to this congregation. Be an encouragement to those in your congregation.

Paul said, be an example to the believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, and in purity.

[26 : 16] Be an example. And so when we ask the question of Psalm 24, who is the man that shall ascend into the hill of God?

Or who within his holy place shall have a firm abode? The answer is Jesus, of course, because his hands are clean. His heart is pure. He has not lifted up his soul, nor sworn deceitfully.

But as Christians, we look at Jesus. As followers of Christ, as citizens of the kingdom, as children of our heavenly Father, as disciples of Jesus Christ, as those who are blessed by King Jesus, our calling, our commission, our command from heaven is to imitate and emulate the blessed man.

We are to walk in the footsteps of Jesus. That's what the Beatitudes are all about. They're telling us to walk in the footsteps of Jesus. To possess and practice the blessed life.

We're to possess and practice blessed purity. We're to have a pure heart, a pure head, and pure hands.

[27 : 31] And we're to do it by, I shouldn't say simply, because it's not simple, by doing what God's Word commands. We're to have a pure heart, and pure hands, by doing what God's Word commands.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Well, may the Lord bless these few thoughts to us.

Let us pray. Our Heavenly Father, we confess to Thee this evening that all that our hearts are far from what they ought to be, but we give thanks to Thee that Thee were a God who has worked in our experience and worked in our heart, that Thee were one who has made us alive by Thy Spirit, that Thee were the one who has changed our hardened heart of stone to a healthy heart of flesh. And Lord, we know, and we confess with Asaph that my flesh and heart doth faint and fail, but our testimony is that God doth fail us never, that Thee were faithful, Thee were good to us. And help us, we pray, to have a pure heart and a pure hands. Help us, Lord, in our work and in our witness and in our worship of the Lord.

[29 : 02] Help us to be faithful. Help us to walk in the footsteps of Jesus. Help us to walk close with the Lord. O Lord, we confess that how often we drift, but we thank Thee and we praise Thee, that salvation is not our grip of Thee, but Thy grip of us, and that Thou art the one who has promised never to let us go, keep us then, we pray, in the hollow of Thine own hand, and keep us ever looking to Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith.

Cleanse us then, we pray, go before us, do us good, for Jesus' sake. Amen. Well, we're going to sing again, this time in Psalm 73, Asaph's Psalm.

Psalm 73, it's in the Scottish Psalter. And then, as usual, the live stream will come to an end after this psalm, and I'll ask some gentlemen here to lead us in prayer.

Maybe if I give the prayer points that I would usually give after the singing, I'll give them to those who are maybe watching at home this evening to stop after the singing and take time to pray with us as we will be praying here.

The first prayer point that I have written here is to pray for Effie, Effie Harris. Many of you might know that she was flown away last night to Inverness.

[30 : 41] We're not really sure what's going on yet, but just to pray for her and that she would know the Lord's comfort and the Lord's help. As you know, she's unwell, she has cancer, and just that she would know the Lord with her and Bill as well.

It's a huge strain on Bill and all that he's been through as well. So pray for Harris House. That's what I always call their home. It's Harris House. So pray for Harris House. We're also encouraged to pray for Tain and Fern Free Church this week and the prayer points praying for one another. So pray for Tain and Fern. As you know, the ministers there are Alistair Macaulay and Andrew McLeod, Andrew Mowgli McLeod. Pray for their building project. They bought a health centre a number of years ago and I don't know how far they've got on with it.

They're also doing Christianity Explored, something we're very familiar with. Pray for that as they seek to reach out and encourage those who are unconverted friends to come to faith.

Also pray for Mull and Col, two little islands. And there's no free church services on the Isle of Col, but the Isle of Mull still has one service once a week.

[31 : 54] And so pray for them. They're both vacant and both struggling. I think Mull is very closely now connected to Oban, which is also a vacant congregation. So pray for these struggling congregations.

So just to remind you at home to pray for these places. So pray for Harris House, pray for Tain and Fern, pray for Mull and Col, pray for our community, pray for souls in our community that we would be, those who are in the Lord would be built up, those who are out of Christ would come in.

Just keep praying. So we're going to sing before we come to prayer. We're going to sing Psalm 73, Asaph's Psalm. And we're singing verses 1 and 2. And then we're going to go over the page to verses 23 down to the verse marked 26.

Psalm 73 in the Scottish Psalter, page 314. Yet God is good to Israel, to each pure-hearted one.

But as for me, my steps near slipped, my feet were almost gone.

And then he says in verse 23, Nevertheless continually, O Lord, I am with thee. Thou dost me hold by my right hand and still upholdest me.

[33 : 09] And we'll sing down to the verse mark 26 of Psalm 73 to God's praise. Amen. Amen. Yet God is good to Israel, to each pure-hearted one.

But thus for me, my steps near slipped, my feet were almost gone.
Nevertheless, continue me, O Lord, I am with thee.
Thou dost behold by my right hand and still upholdest me.
Thou with thy counsel while I live will be will be conduct and guide.
[34 : 51] And to thy glory afterward receive me to abide.

whom I live in the heavens whom I live in the heavens and I but me, O Lord, alone.
And there be earth whom I desire whom I desire besides thee there is none.
My flesh and heart doth have failed have failed have failed but God have failed me never.
For, O, my heart, God is the strength and woe shall for ever God is the strength and woe shall
forever are and for ever