



SERMON NOTES

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Title: Purity of Heart

#3 in the series on the Sermon on the Mount

1. Review

- a. *"Meekness is usually considered weakness. Not here. It is a combination of two elements: the power and decisiveness that dare to be renounced in spirit, and the passion that so deeply feels the pain and sorrows of men that it gives itself in service. Those who want nothing from the world of men and things and yet are willing to share everything, because they feel so deeply, are the meek. As hydrogen and oxygen, two diverse elements, coming together produce an entirely new product, water, so the spirit of renunciation and the spirit of service coming together in a man make a new being, the most formidable being on earth the terrible meek. They are terrible in that they want nothing, and hence cannot be tempted or bought, and in that they are willing to go any lengths for others because they feel so deeply. Christ standing before Pilate is a picture of the Terrible Meek. He could not be bought or bullied, for he wanted nothing, nothing except to give his life for the very men who were crucifying him. Here is the supreme strength it possesses itself, hence possesses the earth. It is so strong, so patient, so fit to survive that it inherits the earth."*
- b. *"...the first three beatitudes strike at the aggressive attitudes toward life, they do not end there. They end, not in a quietism, but in a quest. And the quest for righteousness can now safely take place... Nothing is more beautiful than righteousness; nothing is more hideous than self-righteousness."* [E.S. Jones]

2. Mt. 5:6, *"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled."*

- a. The Westminster Catechism (c. 1646) starts by stating that *"the chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever."* This was re-stated by John Piper as *"the chief end of man is to glorify God by enjoying Him forever."* Enjoying God is for many Christians a foreign concept, either because of their short-sighted view of Him or because we've quenched our hunger.
 - i. Hos. 11:4, *"I drew them with gentle cords, with bands of love, and I was to them as those who take the yoke from their neck. I stooped and fed them."*
 - ii. Matters of the heart. *"It's not that I don't love you, it's just that I love myself more."*
 - iii. *"If you don't feel strong desires for the manifestation of the glory of God, it is not because you have drunk deeply and are satisfied. It is because you have nibbled so long at the table of the world. Your soul is stuffed with small things, and there is no room for the great... The greatest enemy of hunger for God is not poison but apple pie. It is not the banquet of the wicked that dulls our appetite for heaven, but endless nibbling at the table of the world. It is not the X-rated video, but the prime-time dribble of triviality we drink in every night."* [John Piper, A Hunger For God]

- b. Phil. 3:7-11, *"But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead."*
- i. Paul precedes this section by listing all of his own qualifications for righteousness.
 - ii. There is a radical shift from Paul the Benjamite a Hebrew among Hebrews to Paul the Disciple of Jesus of Nazareth.
 - iii. Counts all as worthless trash to gain Christ that he may be found in Him.
 - iv. Do we hunger and thirst for the righteousness of God that will truly satisfy; or do we hunger for the confectionary junk food that the world offers us as a substitute?
- c. Righteousness, *"¹Purity of heart and rectitude of life; conformity of heart and life to the divine law. Righteousness, as used in Scripture and theology, in which it is chiefly used, is nearly equivalent to holiness, comprehending holy principles and affections of heart, and conformity of life to the divine law. It includes all we call justice, honesty and virtue, with holy affections; in short, it is true religion; ²Applied to God, the perfection or holiness of his nature; exact rectitude; faithfulness; ³The active and passive obedience of Christ, by which the law of God is fulfilled; ⁴Justice; equity between man and man."* [Webster's 1828]
- i. *"Dikaosune"* is *"the character or quality of being right or just;"* it was formerly spelled "rightwiseness." It is used to denote an attribute of God, where *"the righteousness of God"* means essentially the same as His faithfulness, or truthfulness, that which is consistent with His own nature and promises. Paul in Romans speaks of His *"righteousness"* as exhibited in the death of Christ showing that God is neither indifferent to sin nor regards it lightly. On the contrary, it demonstrates that quality of holiness in Him which must find expression in His condemnation of sin. *"Dikaosune"* in the sayings of the Lord Jesus means ¹whatever is right or just in itself, whatever conforms to the revealed will of God; ²whatever has been appointed by God to be acknowledged and obeyed by man; ³the sum total of the requirements of God; ⁴religious duties. This meaning of *"dikaosune,"* right action, is frequent also in Paul's writings. But for the most part he uses it of that gracious gift of God to men whereby all who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ are brought into right relationship with God. This righteousness is unattainable by obedience to any law, or by any merit of man's own, or any other condition than that of faith in Christ... The man who trusts in Christ becomes *"the righteousness of God in Him,"* becomes in Christ all that God requires a man to be, all that he could never be in himself. Because Abraham accepted the Word of God, making it his own by that act of the mind and spirit which is called faith, and, as the sequel showed, submitting himself to its control, therefore God accepted him as one who fulfilled the whole of His requirements. [Hogg & Vine]

- d. Humble, Hungry and Hopeful. Dt. 8:2-3, *"And you shall remember that the LORD your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD."*
 - e. Is. 44:3, *"For I will pour water on him who is thirsty, and floods on the dry ground; I will pour My Spirit on your descendants, and My blessing on your offspring;"*
 - f. Ps. 37:4, *"Delight yourself also in the LORD, and He shall give you the desires of your heart."*
 - g. Ps. 42:2, *"My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?"*
 - h. *"He hungers and thirsts after righteousness. He does not hunger and thirst that his own political party may get into power, but he does hunger and thirst that righteousness may be done in the land. He does not hunger and thirst that his own opinions may come to the front, and that his own sect or denomination may increase in numbers and influence, but he does desire that righteousness may come to the fore."* [Spurgeon]
 - i. *"Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.' Not only do the followers of Jesus renounce their rights, they renounce their own righteousness too. They get no praise for their achievements or sacrifices. They cannot have righteousness except by hungering and thirsting for it (this applies equally to their own righteousness and to the righteousness of God on Earth), always they look forward to the future righteousness of God, but they cannot establish it for themselves. Those who follow Jesus grow hungry and thirsty on the way."* [D. Bonhoeffer]
3. Mt. 5:7, *"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."*
- a. There is a shift that takes place at this place in the beatitudes, from a person's attitude and posture before God to the ways a believer interacts with other people.
 - b. *"When this beatitude addresses those who will show mercy, it speaks to those who have already received mercy. It is mercy to be emptied of your pride and brought to poverty of spirit. It is mercy to be brought to mourning over your spiritual condition. It is mercy to receive the grace of meekness and to become gentle. It is mercy to be made hungry and thirsty after righteousness. Therefore, this one who is expected to show mercy is one who has already received it."*
 - c. Most "righteous" people are not merciful to the shortcomings of others.
 - i. A committee went to the train station to meet the new minister whom they did not know by sight. They walked up to a man who alighted and asked him if he was the new incumbent. "No," he replied, "I am not. It is dyspepsia that makes me look this way."
 - d. 1 Tim. 1:12-17, *"And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of*

whom I am chief. However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life. Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen."

- i. We are to be conduits of God's mercy, first by receiving it then by passing it on.
 - ii. The three words that Paul uses to describe himself are filled with images of hostility and violence.
 - iii. Recognizing wretchedness in light of the redemption of Christ is what prevents self-loathing, replacing it with worship and exaltation of Christ.
 - e. Some people may read this beatitude and say, *"if I just show enough mercy to people, then God will show mercy to me."* But we are not the cause of God's mercy or the initiators of it. Instead, only when we have received the mercy of Christ do we have the capacity to show it to others. Mercy is a character of God, not of humanity.
 - f. If we struggle to show mercy to others, perhaps we ought to begin examining ourselves. Like Paul, we need to understand our own wretchedness. When we lose sight of the grave nature of our own sin, we cannot empathize with those who are hurting are broken because self-righteousness seeps into our soul. Self-righteousness is an affront to God and it makes our hearts resistant to repentance.
 - g. If we dwell on our own sinfulness alone it leads to a degree of self-loathing that robs Christ of the glory He is due and, consequently, depletes the grateful joy that fills the soul of Christ follower. We begin to believe we are worthless and depraved beyond redemption and useless to God. That is a lie from the pit of hell.
 - h. *"As if their own need and lack were not enough, they share in other people's need, debasement, and guilt. They have an irresistible love for the lowly, the sick, for those who are in misery, for those who are demeaned and abused, for those who suffer injustice and are rejected, for everyone in pain and anxiety. They seek out all those who have fallen into sin and guilt. No need is too great, no sin is too dreadful for mercy to reach. The merciful give their own honor to those who have fallen into shame and take that shame unto themselves... willingly bear the shame of their fellowship. Disciples give away their greatest possession, their own dignity and honor, and show mercy. They know only one dignity and honor, the mercy of their Lord, which is their only source of life."* [D. Bonhoeffer]
 - i. Who then could not receive mercy from us?
4. Mt. 5:8, *"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."*
- a. In the ancient Greek, the phrase pure of heart has the idea of straightness, honesty, and clarity. There can be two ideas connected to this. One is of inner moral purity as opposed to the image of purity or ceremonial purity. The other idea is of a single, undivided heart - those who are utterly sincere and not divided in their devotion and commitment to God.
 - i. Ps. 86:11, *"Teach me Your way, O LORD; I will walk in Your truth; unite my heart to fear Your name."*

- ii. *"Christ was dealing with men's spirits, with their inner and spiritual nature. He did this more or less in all the Beatitudes, and this one strikes the very center of the target as he says, not 'Blessed are the pure in language, or the pure in action,' much less 'Blessed are the pure in ceremonies, or in raiment, or in food;' but 'Blessed are the pure in heart.'"* [Spurgeon]
- b. If the thirst for righteousness needs the correction of mercy, then, vice versa, mercy needs the correction of righteousness. Mercy without righteousness is mushy. To be merciful toward the fallings and sins of others without a moral protest at the heart of the mercy ends up in looseness and libertinism. Either righteousness or mercy taken alone smells bad, but put together there is the breath of a heavenly scent upon them. The two put together become the third: the pure in heart. The best definition I know of purity of heart is just here: a passion for righteousness and a compassion for men this is purity of heart. To be pure in heart is literally *"undivided in heart."*
- c. *"They shall enjoy greater intimacy with God than they could have imagined. The polluting sins of covetousness, oppression, lust, and chosen deception have a definite blinding effect upon a person; and the one pure of heart is freer from these pollutions."*
- d. *"Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness are those renouncing all claims to personal achievement, who wait for God's reign of righteousness. The merciful, having given up claims to their own dignity, become "men for others," helping the needy, sick, castouts — all those who need any kind of ministry. The pure in heart become that way by giving their hearts completely to the reign of Jesus. Under his rule, he purifies their hearts with his Word."* [D. Bonhoeffer]
- e. *"Who is pure in heart? Only those who have completely given their hearts to Jesus, so that He alone rules in them. Not only those who do not stain their hearts with their own evil, but also not with their own good. A pure heart is the simple heart of a child, who does not know about good and evil, the heart of Adam before the Fall, the heart in which the will of Jesus rules instead of one's own conscience. Those who renounce their own good and evil, their own heart, who are contrite (Ps. 51) and depend solely on Jesus, have purity of heart through the word of Jesus. Purity of heart here stands in contrast to all external purity, which includes even purity of a well-meaning state of mind. A pure heart is pure of good and evil; it belongs entirely and undivided to Christ; it looks only to Him, who goes ahead."* [D. Bonhoeffer]

5. Take-aways

- a. Beware of the apple pie.
- b. Eagerly desire and pursue right-wiseness.
- c. Mercy is a character of God, not of humanity.
- d. Begin by recognizing your own sin light of the redemption and mercy of Christ.
- e. Bear the shame and pain of others.
- f. Sincerity and singularity in our devotion to Christ.
- g. Christ on the throne ought to permanently change our perspective.