



Pastor's Pen

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

Dear Bethel Church family and friends,
I pray this finds you and your loved ones resting in the arms of our great Lord. Welcome to our new weekly email newsletter. We hope this new format meets your needs better.

After several months away for the holidays and ministry updates, we return to our investigation of the traits of Christians Jesus described at the beginning of His Sermon on the Mount. Sadly, some believers have claimed that these characteristics are not for us as disciples of Jesus. Instead, they assert they are the standard for a future age or even a hyperbolic statement of ethics intended to show us the futility of following the law and to drive us to faith. However, these options cannot be the case. Why not? Because the kingdom Jesus was

teaching about is the same one He inaugurated during His earthly ministry. Not only that, but the ethics He promoted were and remain applicable to all who claim the name of Christ. You see, my friends, because we have been given the Holy Spirit as a seal of our identity in Christ, we have the power and ability to live according to the principles of the King and His kingdom.

Because this beatitude is such an astounding statement, that if we have a pure heart, we will actually **SEE** the Holy One of Israel, we will take a couple of months to investigate these 11 simple words more thoroughly.

Let's begin with a look at the word heart. Biblically, this term is used to talk about the center of our personality. So, the heart is the wellspring of our emotions, affection, and will. Thus, Christ is talking to the core of our being. It's the source of everything we do and say.

Please don't miss His emphasis as He tells us, **"Blessed are the pure in heart."** What does this mean? It tells us that those untainted by sin are blessed, not only at a surface level, but at the very center of who they are.

Here lies our problem. If the Scriptures teach us anything, it's that the heart is also the seat of all that is wrong with us. The prophet Jeremiah, as he talked about the coming judgment of Judah, wrote, **"The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?"** (Jer 17:9) Our Lord also emphasized the sad state of our hearts when he confronted the Pharisees because they had placed their traditions above the commands of God. Jesus said that out of our hearts **"come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what make a man 'unclean'"** (Mat 15:19-20a).

Unsurprisingly, this Biblical reality contradicts everything we are told is wrong with us and our society today. We read that if we raise children in the right environment by building up their self-esteem and spending more to educate them, everything will be all right. But none of these solutions work in reality because they ignore the heart of the issue, which is the sinfulness of our hearts! Perhaps we can see this best with this short example. A newspaper once asked its readers to write in answers to the question 'What's wrong with the world?' Perhaps apocryphally, the Christian writer G.K. Chesterton responded: 'Dear Sir, I am. Yours, G.K. Chesterton.' While this succinct statement may sound overly harsh in our modern, therapeutic culture, I am convinced of its truth both biblically and experientially in my life. May God give us the grace to fully understand and winsomely share this reality with our friends and neighbors.

Grace and peace to you,
Pastor Chris

Sunday's sermon:

God's Plan for Marriage: The Husband's Responsibility
Ephesians 5:25-33

this week

Called Session Meeting
3/2 at 2:00 pm

Youth Committee Meeting
3/2 at 4:00 pm

KidsQuest
3/2 at 5:00 pm

Youth
3/2 at 5:00 pm

Circle #1
3/4 at 10:30 am

GriefShare
3/4 at 6:30 pm & 3/5 at 1:00 pm

Diaconate Meeting
3/4 at 7:00 pm

Mentors & Moms
3/6 at 9:30 am

volunteer schedule 3/2

Infant Nursery
Sheridan & Carter Miller

Toddler Nursery
Shirley Brackett & Jenni Quinn

Worship Training
Amanda Brummett & Danielle Austin