

Mount Pisgah AME Church

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Bible Study, Wednesday, January 8, 2020

Developing Christian Character

Kingdom “Attitudes”: *A Study in The Beatitudes*

Matthew 5:1-12

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God”

Review

- The *Fruit of The Spirit* (Galatians 5:22-23) indicate the presence of the Holy Spirit in a person’s character and hence are evidence that a person is a believer in Christ.
- In his “Sermon on The Mount” Jesus introduces the characteristics and culture of “The Kingdom” that God is ushering in through Jesus. The culture of The Kingdom of God is fundamentally different from the culture of the existing world.
- What God esteems has very little to do with what human’s tend to esteem. “Blessedness” (i.e., what God counts as successful) has little to do with material possessions, political influence, or even popularity. “Blessedness” is achieved by walking in harmony with what GOD values.
- God values character. Jesus shares in *The Beatitudes* some of the character traits that God values.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God

- When we come to Christ we are humbled to realize we are all poor in spirit and in need of Christ’s salvation. Receiving it makes us eligible to partake in the Kingdom of God.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted

- Disciples mourn both personal losses and also the existence of personal and societal sin.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth

- Disciples are not weak, but meek: humbled by God and surrendered to Christ: Choosing to respond in alignment with God’s mission and purpose for them.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

- Disciples long for both personal rightness in God’s sight, and justice in the world around them.

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

- Disciples realize the extent to which they *have* received mercy, *are* receiving mercy, and *shall* receive mercy. They are therefore willing to have mercy on others.

Blessed are The Pure In Heart, for They Shall See God

Pure (English):

- (1) Of uniform composition, not mixed.
- (2) Free from impurities, contamination, foreign elements,
- (3) Without faults: perfect

Pure (Greek): *katharos*

- Physically: purified by fire; cleansed by pruning
- Ethically:
 - Free from corrupt desire, from sin and guilt
 - Free from duplicity or mixed motives – wholehearted
 - Innocent

Heart (Greek): *kardia*

- Figuratively, thought of as the center and seat of spiritual life: the soul or mind – as the fountain and seat of thoughts, passions and appetites, as well as the place where the will resides.

Thus “purity of heart” in this sense implies two things:

- Freedom from impure thoughts, motives and desires (Philippians 2:14-16)
- Wholehearted devotion to the One God (Deuteronomy 6:4-6, also Matthew 22:37-38)

Purity of heart suggests some things to us that seem impossible: that our thoughts, passions, desires and appetites (the outflow of our hearts) would be free from corruption and selfishness. In fact the scripture attests to the IM-purity of the human heart.

- Genesis 6:5 Human hearts tend toward wickedness
- Jeremiah 17:9-10 The heart is deceitful (and worse than that – God knows about it!!)
- Matthew 15:18-19 Jesus said it was what came from the heart that *defiles* people.
- Romans 3:23 This is a problem for EVERYONE.
- Romans 7:19-20 Even Paul struggled with this problem.

God’s solution: A Heart Transplant

- Ezekiel 36:26-27 God’s plan is to give us a new heart and a new spirit
- 2 Corinthians 5:17 God does this when we come to Jesus Christ

However, heart health has to be maintained

- Hebrews 3:12-15 By choosing to believe God, our hearts grow purer
- Romans 12:1-2 By offering ourselves, and by the renewing of our minds

It is in the following of The Spirit that our hearts are purified more and more (Romans 8:5-11, Galatians 5:16-18, 2 Corinthians 3:17-18)

The more of God we *truly* take in, the more our desires begin to line up with God’s desires. Our pursuit of God becomes more devoted and laser focused.

- Exodus 20:3 No other “gods”
- Jeremiah 29:13 When we seek God SINGLEHEARTEDLY we will find God

“They shall see God”

- No one can see God and live – God’s holiness like a consuming fire (Exodus 33:20). However those who are spiritually aware can see God moving (v 21-23)
- Those who are born again can “see” (i.e., perceive) “the Kingdom of God.” We who are born again have had our spiritual eyes brought to life (Ephesians 2:1, 4-7)
- Those who believe SHALL see God face to face (1 John 3:2-3)

Those who are disciples then “purify themselves” (1 John 3:3) – i.e, we work to ensure that our hearts are kept as clean as possible, and are focusing more and more on loyalty to Christ through the pursuit of The Spirit.

“Cry out for a clean heart! Lord, purify me and focus my devotion on YOU.” (Psalm 51:10)

*“Give me a clean heart, so I may serve Thee
Lord fix my heart so that I may be used by Thee
For I’m not worthy of all these blessings
Give me a clean heart and I’ll follow Thee.”
James Cleveland*