

Matthew050112-091111
Bridge of Hope
September 11, 2011

“The Messianic Exchange”

Introduction: Good morning! We are glad you are here with us for worship. My name is David and I serve as one of the elders here at Bridge of Hope and will be sharing our talk for today.

“In 1982 the Los Angeles Times carried the story of Anna Mae Pennica, a sixty-two –year-old woman who had been blind from birth. At age forty-seven she married a man she met in a Braille class; and for the first fifteen years of their marriage he did the seeing for both of them until he completely lost his vision to retinitis pigmentosa. Mrs. Pennica had never seen the green of spring or the blue of a winter sky. Yet because she had grown up in a loving, supportive family, she never felt resentful about her handicap and always exuded a remarkably cheerful spirit.

Then in October 1981 Dr. Thomas Pettit of the Jules Stein Eye Institute of the University of California at Los Angeles performed surgery to remove the rare congenital cataracts from the lens of her left eye-and Mrs. Pennica saw for the first time ever! The newspaper account does not record her initial response, but it does tell us that she found that everything was “so much bigger and brighter” than she ever imagined. While she immediately recognized her husband and others she had known well, other acquaintances were taller or shorter, heavier or skinnier than she had pictured them.

Since that day Mrs. Pennica has hardly been able to wait to wake up in the morning, splash her eyes with water, put on her glasses, and enjoy the changing morning light. Her vision is almost 20/30-good enough to pass a driver’s test.

Think about how wonderful it must have been for Anna Mae Pennica when she looked for the first time at the faces she had only felt, or when she saw the kaleidoscope of a Pacific sunset or a tree waving its branches or a bird in flight. The gift of physical sight is wonderful. And the miracle of seeing for the first time can hardly be described.”¹

There is a seeing that is even greater than this wonderful event described in this story. What seeing could possibly be greater than that of a woman seeing for the very first time at age 62? It is when people see God. Yes, once you see God you begin to see Him everywhere and it is breathtaking. There really is nothing more impacting in our lives then when we see God in our world today. Amazing!

And can you imagine what it will be like when the day comes that we will see Jesus face to face for the very first time? Amazing! Outstanding! Indescribable! It will probably be like the difference between seeing by feeling someone’s face to seeing their face with your own eyes.

Let’s take a look at the Beatitudes Jesus shared with this group of disciples who had gathered around Him as we focus our attention on the sixth Beatitude “*Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God.*”

¹ R. Kent Hughes, The Sermon on the Mount: The Message of the Kingdom, pg 53

Matthew 5:1-12 (NKJV) *And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying:*

*"Blessed are the poor in spirit,
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are those who mourn,
For they shall be comforted.
Blessed are the meek,
For they shall inherit the earth.
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
For they shall be filled.
Blessed are the merciful,
For they shall obtain mercy.
**Blessed are the pure in heart,
For they shall see God.**
Blessed are the peacemakers,
For they shall be called sons of God.
Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake,
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

"Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

- **BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART**

1. We must begin our conversation by talking about what Jesus meant with the phrase "pure in heart."
 - The call to be pure in heart was not a new call to His Jewish listener. We find it talked about many times in the Old Testament. For example:
 - **Psalms 24:3-4** (NIV) *Who may ascend the hill of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false.*
 - **Ezekiel 36:25-27** (NIV) *I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.*
 - They understood that God wanted them to be a people with a pure heart.
 - Unfortunately, with the absence of the prophets of God calling them back to such purity, the religious institution of the day had presented them with something else.
2. Here in Matthew 5 being pure in heart is being contrasted against the religious system of the Pharisees that dominated the spiritual culture in Jesus' day.
 - It is in this context of thought that we read what Jesus said to the Pharisees in...
 - **Matthew 23:25-28** (NIV) *"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.*

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.

- "The Pharisees could well be characterized as saying, "Blessed are the outwardly clean, for they shall see God."²
 - 3. This was a radical call for the people to grow in an inner purity rather than the emphasis of the external purity of the Pharisees.
 - Jesus was calling His new disciples away from the outward legalistic system of their day in a culture that was dominated by this system.
 - He was calling them to live differently than the rest of Judaism.
 - Jesus was focused on the purity of heart, an inward purity that would be seen outwardly as it changed the way a person lives their life.
 - 4. Not only was it a radical call for purity in life, it was a call for purity in devotion as well.
 - This Greek word was used in other writings to describe clean water, metals without alloy, grain that had been winnowed, and sometimes feelings that are unmixed.
 - Here in our text it carries the idea of being free from every taint of evil.
 - We are called to be purely devoted to God; as in "thou shall have no other gods."
 - This thought of devotion to God is important because we often relegate this text to only talking about being pure in mind or life in terms of sensuality.
 - While it includes the idea of being pure in mind or life it goes deeper to a purity of devotion.
 - 5. R. Kent Hughes writes, "Here in the sixth Beatitude it means a heart that does not bring mixed motives and divided loyalties to its relationship with God. It is a heart of singleness in devotion to God-pure, unmixed devotion."³
 - The Bible says it like this in **James 4:8** (NIV) *Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.*
 - 6. This purity of heart is about our
 - focus,
 - our complete absorption,
 - it indicates concentration,
 - sincerity,
 - and singleness in thought.
 - What a challenge for people living in our world today, to be pure in heart.
 - 7. To us, just as it was with this group of His first disciples, Jesus says, Blessed, approved of God are the pure in heart
- **FOR THEY SHALL SEE GOD**
 1. Yes, there is a powerful promise for those who are willing to live such a radical call to purity of heart.
 2. The word "they" is emphatic meaning that "they alone" will see God as they become pure in heart.

² R. Kent Hughes, *The Sermon on the Mount: The Message of the Kingdom*, pg 55

³ R. Kent Hughes, *The Sermon on the Mount: The Message of the Kingdom*, pg 55

3. What makes it even more interesting is that the “seeing” part of this phrase is continuous.
 - Thus, they continually see God.
 - Which makes this something that happens now, not just in the future.
4. So what does seeing God “now” mean?
 - It doesn’t mean that we will see God in His total being in this world.
 - What it does mean is that we will see God in . . .
 - the words of scripture, before knowing Christ the Bible is nothing more than another book, but after coming to know Jesus they are words of life.
 - creation around us, where before the natural creation of this world spoke only of itself, but after coming to Christ the creation around us declares the glory of God.
 - people around us, in the past we saw people as unto themselves, but now after knowing Jesus we see them as a masterpiece of God.
 - Events and circumstances, in previous experiences we saw things as happening by chance as we scored a bit of good luck, but now, after knowing Jesus, we see them as divinely ordered of God.
5. “The sixth Beatitude tells us that the purer our hearts become, the more we will see God in this life.”⁴
 - The more focused on Christ we become the more we become absorbed with Christ.
 - The more we concentrate on Christ the more freedom in Christ we realize.
 - The more single our thoughts are on Christ the more we will see Christ in the life that we live.
 - As our hearts grow in purity we see Jesus more in the Bible, in creation, in people around us, and in the circumstances of life. As it says in . . .
 - **2 Corinthians 3:18** (NIV) *And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.*
6. But the ultimate “seeing” is also present in this text of scripture.
 - For the pure in heart there is the promise of seeing God face to face.
 - One day those who believe, who are purely devoted to Christ, they alone will get to see God.
 - This has to be the greatest event of our eternal existence, the vision of God.
 - It is the vision that Job had in the midst of his trial, “*I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes — I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!*” (**Job 19:25-27** NIV)
 - The ultimate seeing, how our heart yearns for that day!

Conclusion: As we bring our thoughts to a close lets pull this profound and challenging thought together. Jesus was teaching His new disciples about a radical call to follow Him. In this Beatitude Jesus said, “Blessed [approved of God] are the pure in heart [those with a clean, unmixed heart for God] for they will [continuously] see God [in life and eternity].”⁵

Keep in mind that this is not about perfection that comes from various spiritual disciplines or practices through which we evolve to this point. This is about a gift given to us through the

⁴ R. Kent Hughes, *The Sermon on the Mount: The Message of the Kingdom*, pg 57

⁵ R. Kent Hughes, *The Sermon on the Mount: The Message of the Kingdom*, pg 58

grace of God. It is about His love for His people. It is about His Spirit empowering people to live in purity of heart.

For the people of God this is about being focused on Jesus, being absorbed with Him as we place our full concentration on him with a singleness of thought and heart. Not because it produced purity of heart in our lives, but because we are consumed with Jesus Christ. **Purity of heart comes as a by-product of His love working in our lives.** In other words, I don't set out to be pure in heart, I set about to know Jesus and my heart becomes pure.

This is more about the hope of a promise [seeing God] than it is about the following of 7 steps in some religious system. There is a path to follow [pure in heart] to enjoy the promise, but it is not the focus. It's seeing Jesus!

Let me return for just a moment to the story that we opened the message with. "The irony of Mrs. Pennica's 'miracle,' according to Dr. Pettit, was that 'surgical techniques available as far back as the 1940's could have corrected her problem.' Mrs. Pennica lived forty of her sixty-two sightless years needlessly blind!"

Hear me, there is a way to spiritually see, it has been available longer than you have been alive. To be pure in heart you must be born again, you must be given a new heart. This is the story of Nicodemus in John 3. The cure for spiritual blindness is to know Jesus and believe. And the better you know Jesus the clearer you are able to see.

For those who are Christians our text provides an awesome opportunity to develop purity in our lives. Here is how you can grow in purity:

- **BE HONEST** – be willing to be completely honest with God about your heart's condition. [You are poor in spirit] Is your heart inwardly clean? Are you fully devoted to Christ?
- **ACKNOWLEDGE** – be willing to admit that only Jesus Christ can make your heart pure. [mourn the sin that is in your heart] You can't attain purity of heart on your own, you need Jesus.
- **REPENT** – be willing to change your life as you follow Jesus to become more and more like Him each day. [hunger and thirst for righteousness] It is about living what we learn from Christ.
- **BE PURE** – be willing to live the truth of what Jesus taught, be pure in heart. [be meek and merciful] Let the love, grace, and forgiveness Jesus has given to you be shared with others as you show them His love. Live it every day in every circumstance.

A great way to develop purity of heart in you.

We want to remind our guests that we have a gift we would love to share with you. After you finish your time of worship take a moment to stop by the Guest Table in the Connection Center and you can pick up your gift there.