

Title: Face to face
Text: Matthew 5.8
Theme: The pursuit and grasp of purity
Series: Matthew #18
Prop Stmt: Only the perfectly pure can be with God

The value of the treasure determines the price that you are willing to pay for the trip. Robert Peary once told his mom, “I will be foremost in the highest circles in the capital, and make powerful friends with whom I can shape my future instead of letting it come as it will....Remember, mother, I must have fame.” And he did. Robert Peary spent 23 years and 8 trips attempting to discover the North Pole. He almost died several times. After his last trip, he returned to civilization only to find out that someone else, a former colleague had beaten him to the discovery. So, Peary hastily announced that he had made it to the North Pole and then attempted to discredit the other man. He was so intent on being the first that he would do anything he had to in order to get the glory. Today, Peary is known as a lying, calculating, egomaniac. Historians have concluded that Peary never made it to the North Pole. Robert Peary overvalued the treasure of discovering the North Pole. It was everything to him and he was willing to pay any price to get it. The value of the treasure determines the cost of the trip. In our text, Jesus displays the ultimate treasure (seeing God). He also points out the ultimate cost – “a pure heart.”

Read Text:

I am deliberately, self-consciously, methodically, patiently, giving an entire sermon to each of the beatitudes that preface the first recorded sermon that Jesus preached known as the Sermon on the Mount. This sermon is foundational for our understanding of the life and purpose of Jesus Christ. These beatitudes are foundational for the sermon that Jesus preached, and they are foundational for life as a follower of Christ and a member of his kingdom. For example, in chapter 6, Jesus talks about fasting. Now, the very idea of giving up a pleasure, or giving up a need does not at face value make sense. Which is why fasting is often associated with sacrifice designed to earn God’s reluctant concession, which is wrong! Fasting is the setting aside of the distraction of a gift, so that we can spend time enjoying the Giver. The Giver (God) is greater, far greater, and infinitely greater than all of his gifts put together. The gifts of God are good. In fact, *“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.”* (James 1.17) But the Giver is far greater than the gifts that He gives. So, here is the point that I am trying to make. Your greatest need, your greatest longing, your greatest delight, your most intense, fulfilling, satisfying, soul-intoxicating pleasure will be your experiencing the unveiled glory of God, face to face. The gifts of God cannot compare to God himself. The fact is...

I. **We were made to know God, face to face.**

A. **This is the story of the Bible**

God made Adam and Eve in his image. That is, Adam and Eve were made to be a reflection of God. God put Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. What do you call a place where you meet God? It is called a temple. The Garden of Eden was the very first temple. God met with and related to Adam and Eve in the garden. They were face to face with God. They knew God. They were in the presence of God, meaning that they knew God and they were known by God. And knowing God and being known by God enabled Adam and Eve to know each other with a wholeness and completeness that was without any guards, or barriers. God saw his likeness in Adam and Eve. When Adam fell into sin, the relationship was broken. The very thing that Adam and Eve were made for became marred and they could not get it back. They could not see the face of God and live. An angel was sent by God to block the way back to Eden. They were barred from the Temple. But the story does not end there.

God initiated a restoration plan. He called a man named Abraham to follow him. God established a covenant with Abraham and promised to make a nation from him, which God did. This nation, Israel, was marked by the Tabernacle. The tabernacle was designed to look reflect the Garden of Eden, and interestingly enough, the high priest wore the name of God on his forehead. The high priest was the only one who could go into the holy of holies, where God reigned on a throne called the Mercy Seat which was the top of the Ark of the Covenant. The only way the High Priest could go into the presence of God, was once a year, on the Day of Atonement with the blood of a sacrifice for the sins of the people. It wasn't a full restoration of the Garden of Eden, but it was a step.

When Christ came to the earth, the Bible says that he tabernacled on the earth. He was the dwelling of God on the earth. He was the temple of God in the person of Christ. He was the perfect High Priest who did not have to have the name of God on his forehead, because He was God. He offered the perfect sacrifice for sin, a once and for all, final offering for sin because instead of offering the blood of an animal for the sins of the people, Christ offered himself as the representative for everyone who would ever believe in him. He took our sins and died our death in our place. And when Christ died, the veil in the Temple that separated the holy of holies from the rest of the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The way back to God had been restored. The way back to Eden was open. The way back to a relationship with God was secured. Satisfaction, security, restoration, forgiveness, confidence, peace, rest, was now ours forever accomplished by the death of Christ. This why Paul said in 1 Cor. 13.12, *"For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known."* This is what is in store for us.

When we get to the end of the Bible we read that the new heaven and the new earth are a temple that fills the whole earth. There is no building in this city that is called the temple, because the entire thing is the temple. Like the Garden of Eden, it is the place where God lives with his people. Like the inside of the Tabernacle that God designed, this temple-city is made of pure gold. Like the holy of holies, the eternal city is perfectly square. But, while only the high priest (in the OT) could stand before God, and that for a brief time once a year, we will live before the very face of God continually. Revelation 22.3-4 says, *"No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will*

*be in it, and his servants will worship him. **They will see his face**, and his name will be on their foreheads. And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.”*

That expression, “they will see his face” almost takes my breath away. Moses was warned that he could not see God in his full glory and live. Isaiah was given a vision of God and thought he was going to die. Daniel fell to the ground when he too had a vision of God and trembled violently. The apostle John fell at his feet as though dead. But, this is not the response that we are going to have in eternity. We are going to live with God in all of his glory and not be afraid. God will not have any less glory, but we will be so completely changed that we will be able embrace it and enjoy it. Now, we cannot handle it. Now, we have clues, foretastes and examples of what it is going to be like. God gives us lesser joys now that are designed to point us to the greatest joy.

B. This is what lesser joys point to.

Marriage is a wonderful gift from God, but marriage is not the ultimate gift – God is. Children are wonderful gifts from God, but children are not the ultimate gift – God is. When we read Genesis 22, we are astounded with how Abraham was willing to offer up his son in obedience to God. How could he do that? He was willing to do that because Abraham preferred God to the life of Isaac. Abraham considered God to be of greater value than he did Isaac. And we know that Abraham loved, deeply loved Isaac. So, the question comes, why did God ask this of Abraham? The answer has two parts. 1) It was a test of Abraham. 2) It was a foreshadowing, a prophecy, a promise of what God would do for us by the offering up of his Son in our place. Before Abraham killed his son, God stopped him. God then provided a substitute in place of Isaac. Isaac’s life was spared. But, when Christ went to the cross, this Father, the Father, did not stop his execution and provide a substitute. There was no other substitute that would do. So, why did God go through with the death of his Son on the cross? Now, listen deeply, because I believe that this is a critical truth that is like rich theological marinade for your heart to soak in.

God went through with the death of his Son because he considered **His joy** of our fellowship with him, and **our joy** of fellowship with him to be more precious than the life of his Son. Therefore, seeing God, being face to face with God, living before and looking into the face of God is what gives us the highest joy because it gives God the greatest glory! This is the greatest treasure! But, we lose sight of that here. We are so tempted to take the gifts of God that are given to remind us that He is the greatest giver and we misinterpret them. We think that the gifts are worthy of worship. We look to the gifts for our meaning which in essence means that...

II. We attempt to replace God with cheap substitutes.

It is not difficult to see how some people worship stuff like sports, academic honors, homes, cars, vacations and toys. What is a little more subtle is the worship of respect and security. But Jesus is about to expose in the lives of the Pharisees, the cheap imitations that religion can provide. This is what is so dangerous about rituals in religion. If you are

very faithful and hard-working or even fast in order to impress others with your dedication you may be successful, but it will not satisfy you. What is more, most of the time a rules-oriented purity can only clean up the outside of a person, but is completely incapable of inner purity. Religion is no substitute for God. And here is where we need to be very careful. God raised up the church as the means to spread his glory throughout the world. The church is awesome. Christ died for the church. But, we dare not worship the church. We dare not worship having a good healthy church. A well-tuned, well-oiled, carefully managed church is wonderful, but it is no substitute for God. The same thing can be said about your family. Family life can be wonderful. But, an impressive, successful, healthy family is no substitute for God because your family cannot save you. Your family is not forever, as your family. Your marriage is not forever, as your marriage. Marriage is designed by God to be a reflection of THE marriage. You will be married in eternity, but it will not be to your spouse. (For some of you that comes as a bit of a relief.) You will be married to Christ. The best marriage on earth cannot compare to our relationship with God. Marriage is great, but even the best are only “til death do us part.” Life with God is forever.

This is what God created us to delight in. Nothing else will do, which is why we are empty without God. There is no absolute meaning, no purpose, and no reason without God. Without God, there is no story, no over-arching narrative that ties everything together. Therefore, seeing God, being face to face with God, living before and looking into the face of God is what gives us the highest joy because it gives God the greatest glory! This is what we were made for. This means that God is the highest treasure. Seeing God is the ultimate. What is it worth to you? If we rightfully understood it, it would be worth everything. The value of the treasure determines the cost of the trip.

Which brings us to our text. Jesus said, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” The ultimate treasure is seeing God. The cost of securing that treasure is having a pure heart. Only the pure in heart will see God. But that is the problem. The ultimate treasure is only secured by the ultimate cost.

III. Only the pure in heart will see God.

The ultimate treasure can only be secured by the ultimate condition. Christ is telling us that if you want to see God, then you have to be pure in heart because without holiness, no one will see the Lord. (Heb. 12.14) Let the weight of this statement do, what Christ intended it to do. Initially it sounds as if the ultimate joy and purpose for our lives is out of reach. Let it make you aware of your failure to be pure in heart, so that you are humbled and silent before him. This statement alone is devastating.

A. **What does it mean?**

Recently, my son and I were given the privilege through a friend of ours of driving a NASCAR for several laps around MIS. We like fast cars and we like driving fast and this was hog heaven for us. We went through the training, got suited up, and were ready to go when it started to rain. One of the guys waiting to drive was so upset that he looked up at

the sky and with both hands flipped the bird. I thought, “Whoa buddy, you want to be ashtray filler? Even Obamacare would not recommend that.” Most of you would recognize that doing something like that is impure and might be tempted to think, “Well, I would never do that!” And that may be true. But just because you may not do certain blatant and overt acts of arrogant rebellion and anger towards God, does not mean that you are pure. Being pure does not mean appearing to be not as impure as someone else.

To be pure has the idea of being unadulterated, undiluted, completely true, and void of any compromising ingredient. Pure gold is a gold that is so refined that there is no dross in it. A pure love means that you love someone with no sense or hint or tendency of rivalry or even distraction. A woman who loves her husband with complete purity has never fantasized about being loved by or with any other man, not even for a second. A man who loves his wife with complete purity is not even distracted by the appearance of another woman. Pure love is undivided. It is whole. Purity of intent means that your motivation is completely void of any self-interest. But Jesus said, “pure in heart.”

When Jesus uses the word “heart”, he is speaking of your entire being. This is in contrast to those who think that external purification is all that matters. When you consider the audience that Jesus was speaking to, this statement then and today is shocking. It is shocking because it devastates the person who prides himself on his morality, and the person who prides himself on his religious devotion. No amount of moral superiority towards others, or religious devotion will ever qualify us as being pure in heart. Our best deeds are tainted. Our purest motives are still compromised. Our tears of repentance are soiled with traces of self-interest. We are woefully incapable of causing ourselves to be pure in heart. And now you are feeling the weight of this. Most religion is designed around helping people use external activity to make up for internal deficiencies. If Jesus is serious about this, we are damned! No one is pure in heart.

Let’s say that in order for you to get a degree in your field, you have to take this one course that is only taught once every four years, by one professor. There is no other way around it. And let’s say, that on the first day of class the professor announces, that unless you get 100% in this class, you will not pass. It is all or nothing. And then he announces that since there is no perfect student, no student has ever received a perfect score from him, nor will a student ever receive a perfect score for him. But, you are free to try. “Blessed are the pure in heart, they will see God.” Seeing God is what we are made for, but what hope do we have when we are incapable of being pure in heart?

B. How is it achieved?

Many in Jesus’ audience thought that if they kept the OT law, then they would be pure. But the point of the law was that NO ONE COULD KEEP THE LAW!! They missed the point. That is what Jesus is doing here. He is speaking the truth. Unless you are perfectly pure in heart, unless you love the Lord your God perfectly with heart and soul and mind and strength, unless you love your neighbor as yourself, unless you are completely pure in motive and action, unless you never do anything wrong, or fail to do exactly what you are supposed to do, unless you never say a false word, or have an unkind thought or fail

to say what you ought to say, or fail to have a kind thought, you are not pure in heart. So, what hope is there for us?

What Jesus said that day was true. He did not tell them everything, but he told them enough for them to feel the weight of their condition. We need to be cleansed. We need a pure heart and we do not have one, nor can we create one. We need a heart transplant. And that is why Christ came to the earth. He lived the life that you could not live. He said everything and did everything that fulfilled the definition of a perfect life because he not only acted that way on the outside, he was perfectly pure on the inside. When you admit your complete inability to save yourself and trust in Christ alone, He takes your sin and your guilt from you and he gives you his righteousness. That is, he gives you his pure heart. You are credited with his life that you did not live. But, standing before the Father, you are now seen as perfectly, completely, infinitely pure, forever.

C. What difference does it make?

There is no other way to God. But, Christ offers more than escape from wrath, Christ is the means to unbridled, unending, undiluted joy and He does not begrudge this. In fact, for those who have trusted him, he instituted a “meal” so that we can celebrate this recovery of joy and anticipate the full restoration being face-to-face.