

Today we have come to the sixth Beatitude from Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount:

**Blessed are the pure in heart
for they shall see God.**

This Beatitude sends us out on a search.

WHERE ARE WE TO FIND A PURE HEART?

Finding a pure heart

is about as hard as finding PURE WATER.

Recent studies show that some 260 different chemicals find their way into your tap water. The water you drink every day is only “relatively” pure.

Nor will it do to head to the mountains.

Already 30 years ago when guides took our youth group to the Mt. Jefferson Wilderness, we were warned not to drink water from any stream, even at higher elevations. “It’s all contaminated,” explained our guide.

Even the rain that falls has chemicals and particulates!

It’s hard to find pure water. Just as hard to find a PURE HEART.

In the story of King Arthur and his knights of the Round Table, we think we have found such a heart....a man “untouched and pure”!

The man’s name is Sir Lancelot.

Here, it seems at last, is a knight with a pure heart.

He has valor and virtue, honesty and integrity.

His heart is pure...at least until he becomes attracted to Queen Guenivere, the king’s wife.

Their hearts are compromised. And the result?

Civil war, destruction of Round Table,

and the fall of Camelot, a once noble and peaceful city...

Where else ought we to look for a PURE HEART?

In the Bible, among the heroes of faith?

Take a close look, and this is what you will see in the pages of Scripture:

We see Abraham and Sarah, the grandparents of “all who believe”...
but didn't they laugh (both of them) in the face of God
when he promised them a son?

And didn't they take things into their own hands
when they doubted that God would ever come through?
Both had hearts that wavered.

Or how about David, the Great King – the “man after God's own heart”?
A man whose heart went wandering on a rooftop one night,
whose sins included adultery and the murder of his lover's husband!

What of the 12 Apostles? Starting with Peter, the fisherman, the Rock, the leader.
He promised a true heart's loyalty, and then denied his Lord three times to save
his own neck!

Who among the people of the Bible had a completely pure heart?
More to the point, who among US has?

This beatitude is TROUBLING, isn't it?
If takes pure heart to see God,
how can any of us ever hope to do that?

We know, don't we, that our hearts are far from pure?

Doesn't Bible say with sadness that Jesus “knew what was in man's heart”?

Didn't Jesus Himself say that
“out of the heart come evil thoughts...etc. etc.”

whether it's a tinge of jealousy that our neighbor has nicer home
or a carefully concealed lust after someone who doesn't belong to you
or a sudden flush of anger at your child, your boss, or the driver who
cut you off in traffic?

Pastors are not immune from such HEART TROUBLE....

John Bunyan, the great preacher and the author of Pilgrim's progress
was once told by parishioner how well he had preached that day...
Bunyan replied sadly, “the devil already whispered that to me
as I was coming down the pulpit steps”

Pastors too, have coronary arteries clogged with arrogance and conceit. They too can get hard-hearted toward people who oppose or frustrate them...

We're all in this together!

What can be done with such troubled hearts?

If a physical heart is sick enough, that person becomes a candidate for a heart transplant. Heart transplants were pioneered by Dr. Christian Barnard in 1967. The first recipient, incidentally, lived on for only 18 days.

In years afterward, techniques were refined and perfected. Now there are more than 2000 such transplants every year!

But God had the idea long before Doctor Barnard did. 2500 years ago, through the prophet Ezekiel, God promised:

**I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you;
I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.
(36:26)**

God is the doctor who looked with compassion on us, and arranged for our sin-diseased hearts to be removed and replaced with new, pure hearts.

For a heart transplant to be successful, two things must happen...

First, someone else must die. Someone with a healthy heart. That tragedy is transformed into hope for someone who needs a new heart.

Second, the new heart must not be rejected by the one who has received it.

That's true in the spiritual realm.

First, that someone must die!

The Christian faith revolves around the story of Lent – the story of how Jesus, the Son of God whose pure heart beat with compassion for the lost, who loved even his enemies, willingly died so that we might live.

His heart beat with love and His blood flowed to wash away all the things our hearts have been busy churning out – the jealousy and slander, the arrogance and the complaining, the pride and lust and hatred.

Then His great heart of love stopped beating on that Friday afternoon.

He died the death that we deserved, and in that moment,
His heart, His very Life
became a gift that gives hope to all the rest of us.

The Gospel is the news that someone has died to make a new heart available for you!

But there is a second thing that must happen, the new heart must be implanted and not rejected.

The pure heart Jesus spoke about in this beatitude
is a FORGIVEN HEART that is transplanted into us and received by FAITH.

Have you had the transplant operation?

Have you come to believe in Jesus as your Savior and Lord?

You say, "Yes, I received my new heart when I was just a baby, and my parents brought me for baptism." Wonderful! Thank God for such parents.

Or you may say, "I heard the message as a teen, and I responded by accepting that new heart one day in prayer." Wonderful! Thank God for such days,
whenever they come,
however they come!

For in that moment, we received a NEW HEART, a FORGIVEN HEART,
the PURE HEART of this beatitude.

Now, will we keep these new hearts, or will our old flesh take over and reject them?

"I pray," wrote St. Paul, **"That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith."**

That prayer was no mere formality! There are a host of things that invade our lives and pull us away from that faith,
that wound our hearts and sicken them all over again.

Those new hearts, once implanted, need to be prayerfully nurtured and guarded!

Our Baptist brothers and sisters use a word we Lutheran rarely use, but ought to. They talk about "back-sliding."

You know, that dread disease that often strikes within months after confirmation!

The 13-year-old who with angelic face said, “I’ll stay true” and meant it that day..
but he gets a job, goes off to school, drops out of church, stops praying,
and finally rejects that heart once planted in him.

Only one in twelve young people who get confirmed in the Lutheran Church
are still actively involved in church at age 25!

The middle-aged woman once devoted her energy to reading Bible stories to
the kids, having daily devotions, and pointing to the work of God in the world.
But now the kids are gone, and she has drifted from her disciplines.

The enthusiasm she once felt has grown cold

So it is that we pray for one another, and encourage one another,
so that the hearts God gave us may stay healthy and pure.

One of the interesting parts of Roman Catholic piety is
devotion to the SACRED HEART OF JESUS.

There are congregations and schools that bear the name SACRED HEART.
Usually somewhere in the building is a picture of Jesus – right arm raised
in blessing, and left hand pointing to his sacred heart, visible in the center of
His chest.

At the heart of such devotion is this prayer. Hear it and ponder it:

**Most sacred heart of Jesus,
I implore that I may ever love you
more and more.**

**Most sacred heart of Jesus
I believe in your love for me
Jesus, meek and humble of heart,
Make my heart like your heart. Amen.**

It is a prayer against “back-sliding” – a prayer to stay true, to grow still stronger,
so that OUR HEARTS are more and more like His.

That is one reason we have come here this morning – to ask this very thing.
To ask for new hearts, or else to pray that God preserve those new hearts
of ours and keep us from rejecting them.

There is something up ahead, you see, that PULLS us.

For these new hearts of ours want nothing more, and nothing else, than to SEE GOD face to face.

To stand before Him – not with hearts turned to stone in dread of Judgment, but to stand tall and eager, with hearts beating in joyful rhythm, as we see His blessed face turned to us...

That is the promise in the Beatitude:

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall SEE GOD.

Our children used to sing it while bouncing up and down:

Heaven is/ a wonderful place/ filled with/ glory and grace

When I get to heaven/ gonna see God's face

'Cause heaven is a wonderful place – I wanna go there!

Do you?

The pilot of a small plane crash landed in a remote area. He and his lone passenger had to wait for the arrival of a rescue party.

The rescue party included a county sheriff and several deputies, and when it came, both men shed tears.

The passenger shed tears of frustration and fear, for unbeknownst to the pilot, he was an escaped convict who had been hoping to make a clean getaway.

The rescue party's arrival meant he was going to prison again!

But the pilot shed tears of JOY. For he was alive and the appearance of rescuers meant that he was going home to the family he loved. He was saved!

That's how it will be for us all one day when Jesus our rescuer returns and we stand before Him.

Some hearts will be filled with fear as He says "I don't know you – depart from me"

Other hearts will leap for joy to hear Him say, "Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom, enter the joy!"

What will your heart say?

Ah, you know, if this beatitude is true for you,
if by faith in Jesus Christ you have a heart forgiven, free, and made pure by Him.

It will come true at last.

**Blessed are the pure in heart
for they shall see God!**