

## **Do You Want to See God?**

Matthew 5:8

Pastor Youwan Kang

August 4, 2019

It is tempting to take Bible passages out of context to prove the point we want to make. However, we must avoid conforming God's word to our own opinions and approach Scripture with humility, taking into consideration the context of the passage we are studying. The Sermon on the Mount, especially the Beatitudes, is so well known that most of us probably have some preconceived ideas about what they mean. But let's first look at the context of this sermon. We see the crowds surround Jesus, who then ascends a mountain. The disciples come up to meet Jesus and He begins to preach. The text implies that He is preaching mainly to the disciples, but allows the crowds to listen in. This is similar to how when I preach at weddings I'm mainly preaching to the bride and groom, but the guests are allowed to listen in. Jesus gives the Sermon on the Mount in order to teach His disciples and would-be disciples what it means to be in His kingdom.

Jesus tells us that the values of the kingdom of heaven are the opposite of the values of the world. The poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, and those who hunger and thirst for righteousness are the ones who inherit the kingdom. Those who are in the kingdom adopt these values that are contrary to the way the world works. This is what separates the fans from the followers. The fans admire and know about Jesus, but they are not willing to give up their lives to follow Him. Followers on the other hand pursue a relationship with Jesus and let Him make them more like Him. He knows His disciples intimately.

When we read Matthew 5:8 we often want to see God but not necessarily to be pure in heart. Sometimes we think that if we see God first, then we will have a pure heart. If He only showed Himself to us, we would give up everything to follow Him. But Jesus says those who are first pure in heart will see God. So what does it mean to be pure in heart? There is the connotation of righteousness, holiness, and purity that is expressed in Psalm 51. But it's not just moral integrity. If we look at purity of heart with the lens of relationship it gains a new meaning. It means we have an undivided commitment to the relationship with Jesus. Our heart belongs purely to Him, just as in a marriage the couple must give themselves wholly to each other. It goes beyond inner purity. It's having a pure connection with Jesus. So we must not misinterpret the passage and think that we must be internally pure enough in order to earn our way to seeing

God. That would be works-based righteousness. We know that because we have a relationship with Jesus, He covered us and transforms us with His righteousness. We are purified by the relationship with Jesus. And only through Jesus, not through our own inner purity, can we see God.

Using this relational lens we can also better understand what it means to see God. In one sense it means that through Jesus we can be in the presence of God for eternity. But it also means that we enjoy a special relationship with God now, as His children. We can see God in our lives by how He works through us and through the church. We should long for this closeness with God. Often we seek God's hand of provision rather than God's face. We want His blessings more than we want Him. But seeking God should be our primary goal, not just the means to receiving blessing.

So now that we understand what it means to be pure in heart and to see God from a relational perspective, we should apply this to our spiritual practices. When I was a pastor I read Scripture mainly to prepare for sermons. It was a part of my job. But when I became a stay-at-home dad and no longer had to prepare sermons, it was much harder to read the Bible. I had to remind myself that it is through Scripture that God talks to us. It is a part of the relationship we have with Him. The Bible is always relevant to our lives. Let us listen to God as He speaks through His word. Another good practice is journaling. It is a means of conversing with God. We are so easily distracted and often fail to meditate on or remember how God is working in our lives. Journaling can help us document our conversations and interactions with God. Likewise prayer is a conversation with God as well. We often pray mainly when we want something from God. We must have a two-way conversation with Him. It must not just be about us, but also about Him. We must not just talk, but also listen. Take a moment of silence when praying to listen to what God has to tell you. And also listen to God by meditating on Scripture.

Jesus should be first in our heart. Let us ascend as Psalm 24:3-4 describes, having a pure heart and not lifting our souls to anyone but Jesus. Let us treasure this relationship we have with Jesus, through whom we have a relationship with God the Father.