

Series: The Blessing

December 8-9, 2018

Title: Pure in Heart

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Text: Matthew 5:8

Seeing

Cameras:

The ancient Greeks had a word for a vault, or anything that had an arched cover: *kamara*. The Romans borrowed this Greek word and redefined it as a "chamber or bedchamber." They spelled it *camera*. Sound familiar?

The first camera was just that: a pitch black chamber with a glass film plate in it. The glass plates are long gone, but the name "camera" has stuck. Nowadays, your camera is most likely your phone. You can take a picture and see it instantly. Better yet, you can post it to Instagram or send it to a friend. But your tiny smartphone camera still has a pitch dark chamber behind its lens. If any stray light were to get into that space, your pictures would be ruined.

It's ironic: you need a perfectly dark place in order to capture the light and beauty of the outside world. And you can only take one picture at a time. For the instant that you are taking that picture, the little chamber with the sensor in it is reserved only for that image.

Pure in Heart:

God made you and me the same way. We were made to capture a very special kind of image: the image of God Himself! We are God's cameras in the world. We were made to ultimately "see God." We alone, of all Creation, were made "in His image." In other words, we have the capacity to let Him shine into our hearts and minds and imprint His own image upon us. But if that is going to happen, the "camera" or chamber of our innermost being must be set aside for Him alone.

Jesus put it this way:

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Matthew 5:8 NIV

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God."

Or as Eugene Peterson puts it:

Matthew 5:8 The Message

"You're blessed when you get your inside world – your mind and heart – put right. Then you can see God in the outside world."

"Seeing God"

Life's greatest challenge:

We were created to "see God" and allow Him to imprint His image in our hearts and minds. But how do we actually make that happen? How can we create that inner chamber, that *camera*, where God can project a clear and pure image of Himself in our lives?

David asked this question in Psalm 24. He wrote:

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Psalm 24:3 NIV

Who may ascend the mountain of the LORD?

Who may stand in his holy place?

To ascend God's mountain and stand in His holy place means to be in His presence, with nothing standing between us and God.

David answers his question in the next verses:

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Psalm 24:4-6 NIV

The one who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not trust in an idol or swear by a false god.

They will receive blessing from the LORD and vindication from God their Savior.

Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek your face, God of Jacob.

“Clean hands” speaks of our actions; a “pure heart” speaks of our inner integrity. No disconnect between what we do and who we are. We are sold out to God alone. No other gods. No double exposures. Only then can God project His image into our lives.

Seeing God:

Paul spent his entire life in the pursuit of “seeing God.” He was realistic about how that happens in this life. Writing to the Corinthians he said:

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1 Corinthians 13:12 NIV

For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

We’re like the camera in a telescope that captures just a little bit of the light of a distant galaxy at any given moment. Take a picture of what the telescope sees and you see a fraction of the total reality of that distant object. Allow city lights to enter the telescope and the image will be ruined.

But if you keep at it, the image becomes more and more clear. As Paul writes:

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2 Corinthians 3:18 NIV

And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate [or reflect] the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

The more we allow God to shine into our lives, the more we are “transformed into His image with ever-increasing glory”! But for that to happen, our hearts must be pure – reserved for Him alone.

Pure in Heart

No Rival:

So we have work to do! John writes:

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1 John 3:2-3 NIV

*Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. All who have this hope in him **purify themselves**, just as he is pure.*

To be “pure in heart” requires purifying ourselves, just as Jesus is pure. That means being 100% sold out to God in every area of our lives.

Peter Kreeft writes:

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A pure will loves God with the whole heart and soul and mind. It is “fanatical” – the greatest insult the modern mind can conceive, and the greatest compliment God can give. It is also the greatest compliment a lover can give: “I love you with my whole heart and soul. My love is not divided. You have no rival.”

Pure in Heart:

Think of the person you love most in the whole wide world. How pure is your love for him or her? What do you do when even the slightest temptation comes along to desire another? What do you do when you are tempted to think less than the best of your lover?

This is what God is seeking from you and me. He offers to welcome us into His Presence. But we can only come into His Presence with a pure and undivided heart. He doesn’t demand that we be perfect. He’s working on that. But He does demand that there be no rival. That’s what lovers do.

So ask yourself if there is anything that compromises your love for Him? Are there any rivals? If so, it’s time to clean house and begin the adventure of seeing God!