

13. 🕯️ God Looks at the Heart

When Jesus says, “*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God,*” He isn’t speaking about perfection. He’s pointing us toward a way of living where our motives, desires, and actions are aligned with love for God. To be pure in heart means to be undivided—sincere, open, and willing to be changed. It’s not about appearing holy. It’s about actually being **oriented toward God** on the inside.

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus returns to this theme over and over. He doesn’t praise those who perform religious duties for show, or those who say the right things while their hearts remain unchanged. Instead, He calls out hypocrisy and self-righteousness, and He lifts up the quiet, sincere acts of faith that others often overlook.

These passages are just a few examples of how central **intention and motivation** are in the teachings of Jesus. They help us ask ourselves:

- Why do I do what I do?
- Is my spirituality rooted in a desire to love and know God—or something else?
- Am I letting God transform my heart, or am I trying to manage appearances?

Let’s look at what Jesus had to say about this.

◆ 1. The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7)

This is where the Beatitudes are found, and the whole sermon is infused with concern for motivation:

- **Matthew 5:21–22** – “You have heard it said... but I say to you...”
Jesus deepens the law: it’s not just murder, but *harboring anger*. Not just adultery, but *lust in the heart*. The real issue isn’t the act—it’s what lives inside.
- **Matthew 6:1** –

“Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them.”

Jesus directly confronts outwardly pious behavior with impure motives.

- **Matthew 6:5–6** –

“When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites... they love to be seen by others. But when you pray, go into your inner room...”

He’s crystal clear: true spirituality is about inward intention, not performance.

- **Matthew 6:19–21** –

“Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Again, He’s pointing to interior orientation—not just behavior, but desire.

◆ 2. The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Luke 18:9–14)

This one is all about **posture of heart**:

- The Pharisee does everything right externally—but his prayer is self-congratulatory.
- The tax collector, aware of his sin, prays with sincerity and humility.

Jesus concludes: “*This man [the tax collector], rather than the other, went home justified.*”

God sees the heart, not the résumé.

◆ 3. The Widow's Mite (Mark 12:41–44)

Everyone else gave large sums publicly. The widow gave two small coins—but Jesus said: “*She, out of her poverty, has put in everything she had.*” Again, the outward act (giving money) is less important than the **intention behind it**. Her sacrifice was born of love and trust—not performance.

◆ 4. Woes Against the Pharisees (Matthew 23)

This whole chapter is a dramatic confrontation with religious hypocrisy:

- **Matthew 23:25–26** –

“You clean the outside of the cup... but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence.” Jesus uses a vivid image to expose the disconnect between appearances and inward reality.

- **Matthew 23:27** –

“You are like whitewashed tombs, beautiful on the outside but full of dead bones inside.” It doesn’t get more direct than that.

◆ 5. “Out of the Heart...” (Matthew 15:18–20)

“The things that come out of a person’s mouth come from the heart, and these defile them.” “For out of the heart come evil thoughts...” Jesus explicitly says that *what defiles a person isn’t what goes in, but what flows out of the heart*. Again, it’s not external ritual purity—it’s **inner disposition**.

◆ 6. “Not everyone who says ‘Lord, Lord’...” (Matthew 7:21–23)

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom... but only the one who does the will of my Father.”

Jesus critiques those who perform miracles and cast out demons *in His name* but are inwardly disconnected from God’s will. Intention > activity.

◆ Summary Insight:

Jesus never settles for surface-level righteousness. He calls people to:

- Right motives in giving, praying, fasting
- Humble hearts, not impressive words
- Love that flows from within, not just law observed from without

Purity of heart is His litmus test for authentic discipleship.

Conclusion: The Invitation to Purity of Heart

Again and again, Jesus invites us beneath the surface. He isn’t looking for religious performance—He’s looking for hearts that are real, surrendered, and open to grace. The examples we’ve just read remind us that God sees through all the layers we build to protect or present ourselves. He sees what drives us. He sees what we long for. And He calls us not to shame, but to **freedom**—the freedom that comes when our hearts are no longer divided.

To be pure in heart is not to be flawless. It is to be *honest before God*. Willing. Softened. Real. And Jesus tells us that in this kind of heart—this kind of life—we will begin to see God. Maybe not all at once. But in flashes. In mercy. In the quiet. In the mirror.

The question for us is:

Am I willing to let God refine my motives and re-center my heart?

That's the work of conversion. That's the call of Beatitude #6.