

# Blessed Are the Pure in Heart

by Dwight Pentecost

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of holiness and righteousness in our relationship with God, and how Jesus Christ offers forgiveness of sins and cleansing from sin through his blood.*

**Duration:** 36:33

**Scripture:** Psalm 24:1, Psalm 24:3-5, Isaiah 1:15, Isaiah 59:12, Isaiah 59:16, Ezekiel 36:25-27

**Topics:** "Beatitudes"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by acknowledging the poor quality of the recording but expresses hope that the message will still be a blessing. The speaker then reads from Psalm 24, emphasizing that the earth and everything in it belongs to the Lord. The sermon focuses on the theme of acceptance by God and the need for clean hands and a pure heart. The speaker also highlights the promise of salvation through the death of Jesus Christ, who is referred to as the Lamb of God.

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## Transcript

We regret the very poor quality of this recording. The original master copy which came to us from the USA has a very loud crackling hum in the background. We have removed it in all the gaps between the words and sentences, but it cannot be removed from behind the actual speech.

We trust, however, that the Lord will bless you in spite of the problems with this tape. We will be reading this morning from the 24th Psalm, Psalm 24. Who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully, he shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.

This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob. Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord, mighty in battle.

Lift up your heads, O ye gates, even lift them up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory. May the Lord add his blessing to this, the reading of his precious word.

The time of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ into this world, the nation Israel found herself crushed under the heel of an oppressor. Israel knew no freedom politically. Rome had subjected that part of the world to its authority, and Rome ruled over the land of Israel with an iron grip.

And the people longed for a political deliverer who would reinstitute the national life of Israel, bring them the blessing of his reign. The nation Israel was oppressed economically, for the Roman Empire had imposed taxes upon those peoples whom they had subjugated to support the empire. And the people were hard-pressed to be able to meet their commitments to Rome, and they looked for one who would bring them liberty from such a burdensome economic oppression.

The children of Israel were burdened religiously, for they were under the authority of the Pharisees who, misinterpreting the law of Moses, had instituted a system of works that had been rigidly imposed upon the people which they could not perform. And they looked for one who would deliver them from this religious oppression. They were under the burden and oppression of a guilty conscience, for there was nothing in their political religious system that could give the guilty conscience peace or make it whole again.

And the people cried for a Redeemer, for a Savior. Such-and-one had been promised to Israel in the Old Testament, for God, through the prophets, had promised the coming of a Messiah who would deliver Israel politically and bring them under the beneficence of his rule. He had promised them a deliverer from economic oppression, so that there would be bounty and plenty for all.

He had promised deliverance from religious oppression, for he would be a king-priest who would institute a rule and a reign of righteousness in which righteousness would cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. He had promised a Redeemer who would provide salvation from sin and bring men to peace with God. That hope had been treasured in the hearts of many in Israel down through their long history as they waited for the coming of the Deliverer, the Messiah, the Son of God.

Hope began to course through the veins of the life of the nation Israel when an announcement and a revelation was made to Mary that she would conceive and bear a son, and that his name would be Emmanuel, God with us, that he shall be called Jesus, for he shall be great and shall be called the throne of his father David. His name shall be Jesus, the Deliverer. She came to visit her husband Elizabeth.

Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost, and as a prophetess spoke, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. God has said to Abraham, In thee and in thy seed shall all families of the earth be blessed. And when Elizabeth was thrust into the office of a prophetess and spoke of, Blessed is the fruit of thy womb, she was speaking of the blessing whom God had promised to Abraham.

At the time of the birth of John the Baptist, his father Zacharias had been put into the role of a prophet. As it is recorded in Luke 1, 67, his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost and prophesied, saying, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David. Verse 77, To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins.

And this prophet-priest Zacharias had announced the coming of the hope of Israel. The announcement was made to shepherds as they watched over their flocks by night. Concerning the coming of this one, for the angel said, Unto you was born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.

Simeon, ministering in the temple, was like those associated with the birth of Christ, filled with the Holy Spirit. And he, as a prophet, spoke and said, Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to the will of all people. And the message of the divine revelation made to those associated with the birth of Christ spread throughout the nation Israel.

And that hope that had grown so dim to so many was stirred into flame, and an oppressed people who longed for a political and economic and religious and spiritual deliverer awaited the coming of God's Messiah. But as the years rolled on, and the Messiah did not deliver from wrong, did not lift the burden of taxation, did not deliver them from the oppressive system of the Pharisees, nor from the guilt of their conscience, this hope again seemed to grow dim. Thirty years approximately elapsed from the time that the prophets, at the moment of his birth, spoke of the coming of a Savior, until John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness once again to rekindle hope in the hearts of the people as he cried, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world. And when John introduced him as a king, he was emphasizing that this one who was coming would deliver from the political and the economic oppression of Rome, and would institute a kingdom of righteousness, in which righteous men would find the peace and the provision of God. And when he said, Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world, he was promising that the grip of Phariseeism would be broken, and that God, through the death of his own son, would provide a cleansing from sin and give relief to the guilty conscience.

John introduced the deliverer who had been promised by God. Multitudes pressed around the one whom John introduced to hear words concerning how a man could be made acceptable to God. The record of such a one is given to us in the third chapter of John's gospel.

For Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, was so under the oppression of his own conscience, so conscious of his unworthiness to stand in the presence of God, that he came to this one whom he recognized had come with God's message to seek and answer the question, How can a man be accepted by God? How righteous does a man have to be to stand in his presence and in the presence of the deliverer when the deliverer shuts off his kingdom? And our Lord told Nicodemus very succinctly, God's standard and God's requirement, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. God is a holy God. He is a God of absolute righteousness.

In him is no sin. And the demand that God makes on those who would stand in his presence is no less a standard than the unalterable holiness of God. This is a standard that man cannot attain, but it is God's standard.

The multitudes that pressed around our Lord recognized their need for a political and a religious deliverer who would settle the sin question and give them a righteousness that would make them acceptable to a holy God. And as our Lord, as it is recorded in Matthew 4, 23, went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, healing all manner of sickness and all manner of diseases among the people, and his fame went throughout all the countryside, and these whose attention had been arrested came with their hearts burdened concerning this one important question, what kind of righteousness must we have before we can be accepted into the kingdom of the deliverer? And in that beatitude to which we direct your attention this morning, our Lord gave an unequivocal answer. As he said in verse 8, Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. And if this positive statement is true, the negative, the converse, is also true. Woe to the impure in heart, for they shall never see God.

And this is that which the Lord Jesus Christ put before them to answer this question, how good does a man have to be to be acceptable to God? And our Lord's answer is, he must be as good as God himself is. Man measures himself by his fellow man. When he desires to test his character, his ethics, his morals, he

measures himself by fellow man.

And he can always find who is a little bit lower than he himself is. And measuring himself by another man, he commends himself to himself. And he congratulates himself that he has not sunk as low as some other man has sunk.

What that means is that the ultimate standard of morality is the morality of the most debauched individual who is alive. Because you see, the one that you deem to be below you is seeking out somebody that is below him, so he congratulates himself. And the one that is down there finds out somebody that's a little bit lower, so he can commend himself.

So we have worked our way down the ladder so that the standard of morality and ethics becomes the standard of the most debauched individual that we can discover. Not so with God. When God tests a man's character, his morals, his ethics, his standards, his acceptability to himself, God measures the man by his own ineffable, unchangeable, unalterable, absolute holiness.

And all that does not attain to the standard of the absolute holiness of God is unacceptable in his sight. Holiness is not something that we can compare holy, holier, or holiest. That is good English, but it is bad theology.

A surgeon selecting a scalpel to use in the operating room would reject a scalpel that had a minute spot of defilement on it as readily as one that was severely defiled. Because even the smallest spot of defilement would mean that that scalpel was defiled and could not be used in the surgery. The degree of defilement is inconsequential.

The fact of defilement is what matters to the surgeon. And a thing is sterile or defiled. A thing is clean or unclean.

A person is holy or he is unholy. God is not concerned with degrees. He is concerned only with the absolute.

This fact is presented to us throughout the Word of God, and it's found as early as the third chapter of the book of Genesis. That chapter, we have the record of the first sin that intruded into this earthly creation. When in the Garden of Eden, two creatures who had been created with untried innocence corrupted and defiled themselves by rebelling against the known command of God.

Notice in verse 7 and 8, the immediate result of that disobedience. The eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked, and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons. The nakedness was not before each other.

The nakedness was before God. They recognized that they were unacceptable in the sight of a holy God. They did not need an evangelist to convict them of sin.

The Holy Spirit did that from within. And the fact that they established the dress or the clothing industry was a testimony to the fact that they were unholy and were estranged from God. And the clothing industry exists because it is written into the heart of man that he is unholy and unacceptable to God.

The wave of nakedness and nudity that pervades our society is a vain attempt to deny that man is unacceptable to God, that man is a sinner. And when one parades nudity, he is saying, in effect, I, as I am,

am completely acceptable to God. That is a lie of the devil.

But the significant thing was that that which Adam and Eve fabricated did not satisfy themselves, let alone satisfy God. Because when they, while they were walking in the garden in the cool of the day, heard God coming to enjoy fellowship with them, they went to hide in the garden. And as they cowered in the shadow of a bush, they were acknowledging that they were unworthy to stand in the presence of a holy God because they were sinners.

And Adam and Eve fled from the face of God because of the fact of sin. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God, and the converse woe to the impure, for they shall not see God. The psalmist taught us this same truth in the 24th Psalm.

And the psalmist is picturing himself as a pilgrim going to Jerusalem to one of the annual feasts. And his heart thrills as he sees there on the horizon the beauty of the city and the temple. And as he approaches the sanctuary and approaches the gates of the city, his heart is smitten within him at his own unworthiness to stand in the presence of God.

And so he cries, Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, or who shall stand in his holy place? And the answer comes, He that hath clean hands and a pure heart, who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully, he shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and the righteousness from the God of his salvation. That David said the only one who could approach into the tabernacle as a worshiper was one who had clean hands and a pure heart. He was unworthy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. David had no innate purity to commend him to God. The prophet Isaiah pictured this so graphically in the 59th chapter of his prophecy, Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, neither is he heavy that it cannot hear.

But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you that he will not hear. Hid his face. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

But the prophet says we're not pure, and God has had to hide his face. Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you that he will not hear. Your hands are defiled with blood.

Now he goes down through the chapter to recount the record of Israel's sins, and he summarizes in verse 12 by saying, Our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us, for our transgressions are with us, and as for our iniquities, we know them. And in verse 16, God saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor. Therefore his arm brought salvation unto him, and his righteousness it sustained him.

He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation upon his head. And he put on garments of vengeance, for clothing was clad with zeal as a cloak. Verse 20, And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord.

And after the prophet in this chapter is portrayed, Israel's heinous sin that causes God to turn his face, sin that prevents them from coming into the presence of God, the prophet promises the coming of a Redeemer, who will grant them deliverance and forgiveness. The prophet Ezekiel likewise portrays the promise of God, as God said in verse 25 of chapter 36, I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean from all your filthiness, from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and

a new spirit will I put within you, and take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and give you a heart of flesh, and put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments unto them.

Verse 29, I will save you from all your uncleanness. And there the prophet promised the coming of one who would do a divine work, so that sinners who come to God through him might be cleansed, and they might be given pure hands and clean hearts, so that they might come into the presence of God. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

How like children we are. Received a Christmas letter from some friends this week who were talking about their two small children, and how childlike they were when the mother commented that the children were at that stage where they could take a bath without ever getting wet. And how childlike we are thinking that we can cleanse away the defilement of the heart without a bath, and render ourselves acceptable to God without coming in God's prescribed way through the blood of Jesus Christ.

And this is the message that Christ is trying to get across to these multitudes. You need a deliverer, political deliverer, yes. An economic deliverer, yes.

A religious deliverer, yes. But above all, you need a redeemer who will grant cleansing from sin or apart from holiness. No man can see the Lord.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. And this beatitude has two important things to say. The first is that a sinner is totally unacceptable to God, no matter how upright and moral and good and kind he may be in the world's sight, because he has not attained to the perfection that belongs to God himself.

When measured by the light of the holiness of God, he is unholy. And until one is as righteous in the sight of God as Jesus Christ is righteous, he shall never stand in God's presence. He shall always stand before God as a judge to hear him say, Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angel.

But Jesus Christ came, and he offered himself as a sacrifice for our sins on the cross. By his death, he paid the price for the sin of the world. God offers forgiveness of sins to anyone who will accept Jesus Christ as a personal Savior.

Isaiah tells us that our righteousness in the sight of God is as filthy rag. That's the divine viewpoint. But Jesus Christ, by his death, takes away those filthy rag, and he clothes us with his own perfection.

So that when God looks at the one who trusts Christ for salvation, God sees that one as he sees his own beloved son. So dear, so very dear to God, dearer I could not be, for in the person of his son, I am as dear as he. So near, so very near to God, nearer I could not be, for in the person of his son, I am as near as he.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. But there is a second truth to be learned from this beatitude, and that is even though we have been redeemed by the blood of Christ and have been made a member of God's family, God cannot and will not have fellowship with us on the level of our sinfulness. Holiness is a prerequisite to fellowship.

And if I regard iniquity in my heart, Psalm 66 says, the Lord will not hear me, and I cannot enjoy the light of his countenance and the blessing of his companionship apart from clean hands and a pure heart. First

John 1, 7, we are told the blood of Jesus Christ, God's son, keeps on cleansing us from all sin. And in 1, 9, he tells us if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Holiness, righteousness, a prerequisite to entrance into God's presence. That same righteousness, a prerequisite to fellowship with him day by day. That is why we do well to sing more holiness, give me, more like the master I would ever be.

Holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. We pray our father, that the word of God may reveal to us the absolute unalterable holiness of God.

May reveal to us those standards of righteousness that thou dost make for those who would stand in thy presence. May reveal to us that which is a prerequisite to the enjoyment of fellowship with a holy God. Create in us a hunger and a thirst for righteousness.

That Christ might be formed in us by the spirit and that his righteousness might become the character of our lives as we live by the power of the indwelling Christ. Give us the joy of seeing thy face because the righteousness of Christ that has been imparted to us is worked out through us. Dismiss us with the riches of thy grace and mercy and peace upon us.

We pray in Jesus name, amen.

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