



Rev A

Adult Education Lesson 17

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Mt 5:8

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”

Collect

This fall we are studying the writings of St. Augustine, specifically his commentary on Matthew’s recollection of the sayings of Jesus (Mt 5:1 -7:29) which begin with the beatitudes. We are fortunate to have St. Augustine’s commentary, as it has been preserved in Latin since the 5th c. and has also been translated into English. There are eight sentences in the beatitudes. There is a progression here in Matthew’s listing of Jesus’s sayings, and I would like us to first understand the sixth beatitude because it is one of the most difficult to explain.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”

St. Paul said:

Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.(2 Corinthians 3:6)

The text as seen with the physical eyes, shows only the *letter that killeth*. (i.e. you will be misled if you take the words literally. Being misled, you will not understand, and will not receive the benefit of the promise). We must look for the ‘spirit’ of the text that is seen only with the ‘eye of the heart’. As God has told us “seek and you shall find”

(See also lesson 19 on the meaning of blindness).



Glen Miller



Origen’s commentary on all the beatitudes is unfortunately lost - we have only his commentary on one of the beatitudes.

The word for word translation of the Greek is *Blessed the clean to the heart, for they the God shall see.*

This content is extracted from The Literature - Introduction, 'More Insight'. highlights and [comments] are mine

Pure in Heart

Blessed [My comments] Let us first consider the meaning of *blessed*. It is Greek μακαριος pronounced “makarios” and it means supremely blest, by extension this includes the meanings: “fortunate”, “happy”, “well-off”.

The Church Fathers created a special Latin word for this condition. It is “beati”. Our word “blessed” was derived from “beati”, and now you know why these passages in the bible about being “blessed” are called the “beatitudes”.

You can imagine how awkward it would be to express the condition of makarios in English, if the Church had not created a special word for it. We would have to say something like “the pure in heart are **“supremely blest, including happy, fortunate, and well off”** “. So, when you read “blessed” remember what it encompasses.

Occurrences of the Greek word “μακαριος” in the NT.

Let’s start our search for makarios outside the ‘beatitudes’ . We have to either search for μακαριος, in a Greek bible, or for the Strong’s reference number 3107 in a Greek lexicon.

Let’s look at one verse.

*Mt 16:17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, **Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.***

Jesus states that *flesh and blood hath not revealed it ...* that is, no man has ever revealed to Peter the truth which is behind the words “*thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God* “. Peter had not heard any man say these words but God the Holy Spirit communicated this truth directly to Peter’s “heart”.

3107. μακαριος makarios *mak-ar'-ee-os*; a prolonged form of the poetical μακαρ makar (meaning the same); supremely blest; by extension, fortunate, well off:-- blessed, happy(X -ier).

{(but don’t search your bible for ‘blessed’ as this English word has been used for meanings other than the one we are studying now). The word: Strong’s 3107, appears 49 times in the NT. Strong’s numbers are only keyed to the AV Bible. Every word of the KJV bible has it’s own Strong’s number.}

(Matthew 16:16, 17) And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

Commentary on the Lord’s Sermon on the Mount

Augustine

CUAP

0813210852

More Insight

Peter's mind translated this truth into a verbal expression, though the meaning of *Son of the living God* would be inexplicable to any other disciple for the meaning was spiritually discerned by Peter only.

So here we see that Peter was blessed by God the Father with a truth about God, and in a form that transcends normal intelligence and defies complete description in any language. And because the Holy Spirit had not yet descended into the Apostles, (this was to happen on the day of Pentecost) Jesus, knew that they would misunderstand what Peter had said, so he *charged* he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ. (Matthew 16:20) ..

Now see this passage from Luke:

*(Luke 10:21-23)... I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: ... And he turned him unto his disciples, and said privately, **Blessed** are the eyes [of their hearts] which see the things that ye see:*

We see that a believer is blessed after God reveals something directly to the "eye of the heart".

Similarly:

*Mt 13:16 But **blessed** are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.*

And here we see that he who has the "word" in the heart and does the will of God is blessed (God has revealed something directly to that person's 'heart').

*(Luke 11:28) But he said, Yea rather, **blessed** are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.*

[This is also advice to us. God through the Holy Spirit, must be the one to announce to the believer the truth about Jesus Christ, not any other, otherwise it will not be believed "in the heart", only accepted intellectually through "faith".

"man" is theologically neutral and includes both male and female. It relates not to the body but to the spiritual mind/soul of the person.]

"The sole purpose of the Holy Ghost is to manifest Christ in the believer." (Edward Salmon, XIII Bp. of South Carolina).

More Insight

There are many more examples. You can already see that when a believer is blessed (makarios) it causes a change in the understanding of the believer. This change is the result of the passage of some truth from God's spirit to the spirit within the human body, and it is spiritually discerned.

Pure in heart - Now let's look at *pure in heart*.

1 PE 1:22 Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a **pure heart** fervently:

2 PE 3:1 This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your **pure minds** by way of remembrance:

1 Ti 1:5 Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a **pure heart**, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned:

2 Ti 2:22 Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a **pure heart**.

St. Augustine's commentary

St. Augustine said:

8. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." How foolish, therefore, are those who seek God with these outward eyes, since **He is seen with the heart!** as it is written elsewhere, "And in singleness of heart seek Him."²⁶ For that is a pure heart which is a single heart: and just as this light cannot be seen, except with pure eyes; so neither is God seen, unless that is pure by which He can be seen.²⁷

"Pure" does not mean also perfect. Something can be imperfect in form or in matter, but can still be pure. Think of pure as meaning also: "holy", "dedicated", for one specific purpose", "singleness of purpose". Just as a chalice can be dedicated for its purpose of holding the sacramental wine, and thereby made holy, our hearts can be made holy. Even a chalice which has a chip out of it, or a dent, though defective and imperfect, can be holy if it is dedicated to its one purpose.

²⁶ Wisd. i. 1.

²⁷ "Pure in heart." "Ceremonial purity does not suffice" (Bengel). The singleness of heart which has God's will for its aim, and follows integrity with our fellowmen (Tholuck). "Shall see God:" the most infinite communion with God (Tholuck).

We wish to see God, we seek, we kindle with desire to see Him. Who doth not? But mark what is said: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

Provide thyself then with that whereby thou mayest see Him. For (to speak after the flesh) how with weak eyes desirest thou the rising of the sun? Let the eye be sound, and that light will be a rejoicing, if it be not sound, it will be but a torment. For it is not permitted with a heart impure to see that which is seen only by the pure heart. Thou wilt be repelled, driven back from it, and wilt not see it. For "blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." How often already hath he enumerated the blessed, and the causes of their blessedness, and their works and recompenses, their merits and rewards! But nowhere hath it been said, "They shall see God."

1. *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."*
2. *"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."*
3. *"Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."*
4. *"Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, they shall be filled."*
5. *"Blessed are the merciful, they shall obtain mercy."*

In none of these hath it been said, "They shall see God."

When we come to the (6) "pure in heart," there is the vision of God promised. And not without good cause; for **there, in the heart, are the eyes, by which God is seen.** Speaking of these eyes, the Apostle Paul saith, "The eyes of your heart being enlightened. ¹⁸⁹⁴" At present then these eyes are enlightened, as is suitable to their infirmity, by faith; hereafter as shall be suited to their strength, they shall be enlightened by sight. "For as long as we are in the body we are absent from the Lord; For we walk by faith, not by sight. ¹⁸⁹⁵ "

From Gore, Goudge, Guillaume "A New Commentary on Holy Scripture"

poor = pious in Deutero-Isaiah (66:2) and the Psalter (PS 34:18) and means not just the poor but the group of religious people who will constitute the 'remnant'.

mourning = ardent longing for the establishment of the kingdom. The Messiah is the comforter to the 'mourners of Zion' (Is 57:18, 61:2)

Meekness = confident dependence upon God who will vindicate His people by making them inheritors of the world. (Ps 37:11).

thirst after righteousness = the redeeming righteousness of God who will fulfill His promise to them. (Ps 63:1; Is 41:17, 44:3, 55:1)

Merciful (Dt 13:17, 13:18, 30:3).

Pure in heart = single in purpose, whole hearted. (Prob. Dt 6:5, cf. PS 24:3-5; 51:10) see God cf. Ps 51:17 and for the connection btwn beatific vision and messianic hope Is 40:5, 52:7,8.

Those who follow after righteousness are promised the restoration of Zion (cf. Is 51:1, 51:1)

1894 Eph. i. 18.

Now as long as we are in this state of faith, what is said of us? "We see now through a glass darkly; but then face to face. ¹⁸⁹⁶"

1896 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

7. Let no thought be entertained here of a bodily face. For if enkindled by the desire of seeing God, thou hast made ready thy bodily face to see Him, thou wilt be looking also for such a face in God. But if now thy conceptions of God are at least so spiritual as not to imagine Him to be corporeal ... if I have succeeded in breaking down in your heart, as in God's temple, that image of human form; if the words in which the Apostle expresses his detestation of those, "who, professing themselves to be wise became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like unto corruptible man, ¹⁸⁹⁸" have entered deep into your minds, and taken possession of your inmost heart; if ye do now detest and abhor such impiety, if ye keep clean for the Creator His own temple, if ye would that He should come and make His abode with you, "Think of the Lord with a good heart, and in simplicity of heart seek for Him. " ¹⁸⁹⁹

1898 Rom. i. 22, 23.

Mark well who it is to whom ye say, if so be ye do say it, and say it in sincerity, "My heart said to Thee, I will seek Thy face." Let thine heart also say, and add, "Thy face, Lord, will I seek." ¹⁹⁰⁰ For so wilt thou seek it well, because thou seekest with thine heart.

1899 Wisd. i. 1.

Scripture speaks of the "face of God, the arm of God, the hands of God, the feet of God, the seat of God," and His footstool; but think not in all this of human members. If thou wouldest be a temple of truth, break down the idol of falsehood. The hand of God is His power. The face of God is the knowledge of God. The feet of God are His presence. The seat of God, if thou art so minded, is thine own self. But perhaps thou wilt venture to deny that Christ is God! "Not so," you say.

1900 Ps. xxvi. 8, Sept. (xxvii. English version).

St. Augustine's commentary

Dost thou grant this too, that “Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God? “¹⁹⁰² I grant it,” you say. Hear then, “The soul of the righteous is the seat of wisdom.” “Yes.” For where hath God His seat, but where He dwelleth? And where doth He dwell, but in His temple? “For the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.” ¹⁹⁰³

Take heed therefore how thou dost receive God. “God is a Spirit, and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth.” ¹⁹⁰⁴ Let the ark of testimony enter now into thy heart, if thou art so minded, and let Dagon fall.¹⁹⁰⁵ Now therefore give ear at once, and learn to long for God; learn to make ready that whereby thou mayest see God. “Blessed,” saith He, “are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” Why dost thou make ready the eyes of the body? If He should be seen by them, that which should be so seen would be contained in space. But He who is wholly everywhere is not contained in space. Cleanse that whereby He may be seen.

9. But do not so conceive of these precepts and rewards, as to think when thou dost hear, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God,” that the poor in spirit, or the meek, or they that mourn, or they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, or the merciful, will not see Him. Think not of those that are pure in heart, that they only will see Him, whilst the others will be excluded from the sight of Him. For all these several characters are the selfsame persons.

Amori Christi et Ecclesiae –
Glen C. Miller OSV

1901 1 Cor. i. 24.

1902 Wisd. i.

1903 1 Cor. iii. 17.

1904 John iv. 24.

1905 1 Sam. v. 3.
A Philistine deity. Dagon is represented as a composite figure, human as to the upper part of the body, fish-like as to the lower. From this it may well be inferred that Dagon was a fish-god,

St. Augustine's commentary

They shall all see; but they shall not see in that they are poor in spirit, or meek, or in that they mourn, and hunger and thirst after righteousness, or are merciful, but in that they are pure in heart. Just as if bodily works were duly assigned to the several members of the body, and one were to say for example, Blessed are they who have feet, for they shall walk; blessed are they that have hands, for they shall work; blessed are they that have a voice, for they shall cry aloud; blessed are they who have a mouth and tongue, for they shall speak; blessed are they that have eyes, for they shall see. Even so our Lord arranging in their order the members as it were of the soul, hath taught what is proper to each.

Humility qualifies¹⁹⁰⁸ for the possession of the kingdom of heaven; meekness qualifies for possessing the earth; mourning for consolation; hunger and thirst after righteousness for being filled; mercy for the obtaining mercy; a pure heart for seeing God.

1908 *Apta est.*

10. If then we desire to see God, whereby shall our eye be purified? For who would not care for, and diligently seek the means of purifying that eye whereby he may see Him whom he longeth after with an entire affection?

The Divine record has expressly mentioned this when it says, “purifying their hearts by faith.”¹⁹⁰⁹ The faith of God then purifies the heart, the pure heart sees God.

1909 Acts xv. 9.

Recommended Books

ISBN

Commentary on the Lord’s Sermon on the Mount	Augustine	CUAP	0813210852
A New Commentary on Holy Scripture	Gore, Charles	Macmillan	

But because this faith is sometimes so defined by men who deceive themselves, as though it were enough only to believe (for some promise themselves even the sight of God and the kingdom of heaven, who believe and live evilly); against these, the Apostle James, incensed and indignant as it were with a holy¹⁹¹⁰ charity, saith in his Epistle,

1910 *Spirituali.*

“Thou believest there is one God.” Thou applaudest thyself for thy faith, for thou markest how that many ungodly men think there are gods many, and thou rejoicest in thyself because thou dost believe that there is but one God; “Thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.”¹⁹¹¹ Shall they also see God? They shall see Him who are pure in heart. But who can say that unclean spirits are pure in heart? And yet they also “believe and tremble.”

1911 Jas. ii. 19.

II. Our faith then must be different from the faith of devils. For our faith purifies the heart; but their faith makes them guilty. For they do wickedly, and therefore say they to the Lord, “What have we to do with Thee?” When thou hearest the devils say this, thinkest thou that they do not acknowledge Him? “We know,” they say, “who Thou art: Thou art the Son of God.”¹⁹¹² This Peter says, and is commended; the devil says it, and is condemned. Whence cometh this, but that though the words be the same, the heart is different? Let us then make a distinction in our faith, and not be content to believe. This is no such faith as purifieth the heart. “Purifying their hearts,” it is said, “by faith.”¹⁹¹³ But by what, and what kind of faith, save that which the Apostle Paul defines when he says, “Faith which worketh by love.”¹⁹¹⁴ That faith distinguishes us from the faith of devils, and from the infamous and abandoned conduct of men. “Faith,” he says. What faith? “That which worketh by love,” and which hopeth for what God doth promise.

1912 Luke iv. 34; Matt. xvi. 16.

1913 Acts xv. 9.

1914 Gal. v. 6.

Nothing is more exact or perfect than this definition. There are then in faith these three things. He in whom that faith is which worketh by love, must necessarily hope for that which God doth promise. Hope therefore is the associate of faith. For hope is necessary as long as we see not what we believe, lest perhaps through not seeing, and by despairing to see, we fail. That we see not, doth make us sad; but that we hope we shall see, comforteth us. Hope then is here, and she is the associate of faith. And then charity also, by which we long, and strive to attain, and glow with desire, and hunger and thirst. This then is taken in also; and so there will be faith, hope, and charity. For how shall there not be charity there, since charity is nothing else but love? And this faith is itself defined as that “which worketh by love.” Take away faith, and all thou believest perisheth; take away charity, and all that thou dost perisheth. For it is the province of faith to believe, of charity to do.

For if thou believest without love, thou dost not apply thyself to good works; or if thou dost, it is as a servant, not as a son, through fear of punishment, not through love of righteousness. Therefore I say, that **faith purifieth the heart, which worketh by love.**

12. And what does this faith effect at present? What does it by so many testimonies of Scripture, by its manifold lessons, its various and plentiful exhortations, but make us “see now through a glass darkly, and hereafter face to face.” But return not now in thought again to this thy bodily face.

St. Augustine's commentary

Think only of the face of the heart. Force, compel, press thine heart to think of things divine. Whatsoever occurs to thy mind that is like to a body, throw it off from thee. If thou canst not yet say, "It is this," yet at least say, "It is not this." For when wilt thou be able to say, "This is God"? Not even then, when thou shalt see Him; for what thou shalt then see is ineffable. Thus the Apostle says, that he "was caught up into the third heaven, and heard ineffable words."¹⁹¹⁵ If the words are ineffable, what is He whose words they are? Therefore as thou dost think of God, perchance there is presented to thee the idea of some human figure of marvellous and exceeding greatness, and thou hast set it before the eyes of thy mind as something very great, and grand, and of vast extension. Still somewhere thou hast set bounds to it. If thou hast, it is not God. But if thou hast not set bounds to it, where can the face be? Thou art fancying to thyself some huge body, and in order to distinguish the members in it, thou must needs set bounds to it. For in no other way but by setting bounds to this large body, canst thou distinguish the members. But what art thou about, O foolish and carnal imagination! Thou hast made a large bulky body, and so much the larger, as thou hast thought the more to honour God. Another adds one cubit to it, and makes it greater than before.

1915 2 Cor. xii. 2–4.

Paul: 2 Co 12:12

