

From the Pulpit of the Japanese Baptist Church of North Texas
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Blessed Are the Pure in Heart

Matthew 5:3-8

- 5:1 Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him.
- 5:2 And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:
- 5:3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- 5:4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.
- 5:5 "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.
- 5:6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.
- 5:7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.
- 5:8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

1. Seeking Pure Heart

Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart," even though people don't find value in it nowadays. This generation suggests you to be strong and smart, but pure in heart; they would rather insist, "If you get attached to it too much, you will be abandoned. You have to be broadminded enough to associate with both of good and evil for the sake of compromise." People no longer think that a pure heart is valuable, but that it's just useless. However, I have to say loud, invoking the pure heart is only allowed to human beings and it's a great thing. If you don't want the pureness and aren't even interested in it, you are gradually losing the character of mankind.

Nowadays, people don't talk about the ones with pure and beautiful

heart both in school and home. When they hear such stories, they aren't impressed by it and react saying, "Well, they don't seek benefits. Aren't they stupid?" Moreover, when people ask children what they want to be when they grow up, most of them answer, "to be rich," or "to be popular." It's rare for them to say that they want to contribute to society or want to be righteous against evil.

This is because adults usually only desire of wealth, fame, or being outstanding, meaning "success" in this world. Children reflect adults, and present children don't know pureness in heart or beauty in life is because the adults don't teach them and they did not become the role models.

This is sad, and this is sadder that Christian people, who must know God's sacrificial love or beautiful life of Jesus, seek less than a pure heart and a beautiful life for themselves.

This happened in the last 30 years, and before that Christian people must have had the passion to be purified more and more to be close to God. At the time worship began, they read the verse in Psalm 24:3, "Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully." Additionally, young adult group had this motto in 2 Timothy 2:22, "So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart." People were afraid of Hebrew 12:14, "Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord," and prayed individually and as a whole Church in Psalm 51:10, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." This

was the natural prayer for those whom Jesus atoned and Holy God touched to save.

However, as a fleeting episode, Churches prioritize the point, “this teaching is useful for human lives,” over theological factors. It’s said “relevant” teachings. People try to seek relevance of real lives in preaching and Bible studies, such as human relationship, raising up children, solutions for family problems, or social matters of recent generations. This is important enough to discuss, and should be taught in Churches, and good to be learned; but we cannot forget the basis of everything; salvation of Jesus Christ, spiritual growth of the believers, and relationship with God. If we loose the spiritual things, teachings of Church becomes no different from the lessons of self-help seminar. Church may become a club house or an activity center; anything but the “house of prayer” that people worship God.

We don’t ignore what generations need and require, but the one and only answer is to remember the basis of faith, deepen the relationship with God, and refine the pureness in heart of Christian people, for filling out the needs of the generation. “Blessedness of the people whose heart are pure” is the most relevant in our lives, I’m assured, because people are steadfast and strong enough to go forward in any situations through that blessedness.

2. Receiving Pure Heart

Then, “Pure Heart” that God is looking for in us, “Pure Heart” that we should look for, what are they? To begin with, can we have the “Pure Heart”? According to Jeremiah 17:9, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?” and Jesus said in

Mark 7:20 “What comes out of a person is what defiles him. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.” No matter how you cleanse your outside, God will not be pleased if you have uncleanness in your inside. In 1 Samuel 6:7, “Man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.” For make God pleased us and we please God, we need the “Pure Heart”. However, we can not have this by our own power. God is the only one who can give us the “Pure Heart”.

In fact, God promised to give us the “Pure Heart” in the Old Testament era. In Ezekiel 36:26, “And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.”

And this promise was fulfilled by Jesus Christ. The blood that Jesus Christ shed on the cross has the power to wash away sins from believers. Jesus Christ dedicated his own life, accomplished the work of salvation, resurrected and ascended to heaven, and gave us the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit lives in the believers, and it purifies their hearts. No one is appropriate for the holy kingdom of God and we are not allowed to take it over. However, by Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, our sins are purified, we are able to have the “Pure Heart”. In 1 Corinthians 6:11, “And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”

We can not purify ourselves and get the “Pure Heart” We can not get it by the hard trainings or attending the ritual ceremonies. Martin

Luther, as a friar, experienced a variety of hard trainings and realized how much sinner he was. Then, he realized that the “Pure Heart” only comes from God and had a firm belief for this by the Scripture. We can receive it from God by faithfulness in Jesus Christ.

3. Growing the Pure Heart

The believers who received a pure heart from God have a responsibility to keep it and grow it. The salvation that God gives to us has a life. As all living things grow, God’s salvation grows as well in the heart of believers. The pure heart we receive through salvation will grow as well. For the pure heart to grow, it requires time to take care of it.

When we see babies, we say, “Oh, how cute! She/he looks like a doll”. But babies never keep still like a doll. Removing a dust from a doll is enough, but you have to feed, change diapers, hold and talk to babies and it is not easy to take care of them. You don’t need to do that to a doll but it never grows. Babies eventually sit by themselves, crawl, start to walk, start to talk and grow rapidly. The pure heart that God gave to the believers is not a decoration like a doll. It has a life and grows inside of the believer’s heart. You don’t need to give food to a doll but a pure heart that grows need food that is “bread of Words”.

Last week, there was a pastor’s meeting at the DBA office. I brought my Bible but many of the pastors were reading the Bible using their cell phone or tablet. Everything functions with batteries these days. So, one pastor said, “God gave the best battery which is called salvation. This is the best one in the world but it does not work

unless it is charged!” He illustrated Salvation as battery, God as power source, and faith as the wire connecting between power source and battery. The pastor talked about the need of maintenance of the salvation by this illustration.

There were various meanings of “pure” used for the pure heart. It means ceremonially clean or metals become pure after refining by the fire. Moreover, it refers to a tree, which is pruned and looks very nice. If we think about the pure heart that has a life and grows, then it may be easier to understand pure as being pruned. God planted a seed, which was called “pure heart” into believers’ heart. Then with the light of God’s grace and water of God’s words, the seeds will bud out, grow, branch out and make a lot of leaves. But for the tree to produce fruits, a farmer needs to remove unnecessary branches and prune it. For the pure heart to grow, God sometime uses scissors and put a hoe in the believer’s heart and remove unnecessary things. It may cause a pain, but is necessary for the pure heart to grow. The believers receive more blessings by discarding what needs to be discarded.

This is written in John 15:1-5, “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you.” As the pastor talked about the battery, the secret of caring a pure heart is connecting to Jesus Christ through faith.

Let’s seek for the pure heart, receive it, and grow it. Humans who are created in the image of God will have true blessedness when they receive God’s pureness. Lord Jesus said, “Blessed are the pure in

heart, for they shall see God”. He promised to those who seek for the pure heart, receive it and grow it, for the blessing that they would see God. We will learn about “seeing God” next week, but this is the best blessing for all humans. Let’s receive this blessing and have a fellowship with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart” and grow and expand it.

(Prayer)

Dear God, you said “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” You not only tell us to be pure but also cleanse us and give us a pure heart through your Son and the Holy Spirit. Please give us the enthusiastic heart to seek for this blessing and guide us to blessedness of looking upon you. We pray through the name of Lord Jesus, Amen.