9/23/20 Devotional

Let us ponder the sixth beatitude from the Gospel of Matthew:

*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.* Matthew 5:8

We continue our series on the beatitudes from the Sermon on the Mount. The Bible and the Christian faith are deeply concerned about the state or condition of the human heart. So how is your heart? The heart is the window through which we seek and see God. How do we see God? We may be blessed with a revelation, a vision of God where we actually see Jesus or an angel or some beatific image with our eyes. I have had Christians tell me of such experiences in their lives. Or we may hear a voice in our mind which we believe is the voice of God. I personally had such an experience. On the other hand, we can also see God with the eyes of our heart. We have a feeling or awareness of God’s presence or have a God moment or an ecstatic spiritual experience. This can occur at any time or place, such as in the mountains or in the sanctuary. Seeing God is having a sense of God’s reality, God’s living presence. When our heart is impure, we miss perceiving God’s presence or activity in our lives. The eyes of our heart are unable to perceive God’s presence.

What is a pure heart? The Greek word used here has a variety of meanings. It can mean that our motives for seeking God are pure. We desire to seek and know the one true God. That is our only motive. An example of a mixed motive is desiring to seek God so we can reap some personal benefit from God. It can mean a clean heart. It is a heart which acknowledges that one’s life is dependent upon God and lives under God. It can also mean that our heart is right with God. We sense that we are in a right relationship with God. We sense that God has forgiven us. We sense that our mind is attuned to the mind of God. The human heart is never completely pure. But by the grace of God, it can become from God’s perspective, pure enough so that we can be open to the revelation and presence of God.

What does it mean when a heart is not pure? It means one’s heart is hardened, contaminated, callous, narcissistic, evil, or greedy. It is self-centered rather than God-centered. It means that the eyes of our heart are closed to perceiving God. It is a heart which acts as though God doesn’t exist. It is a heart that worships idols and centers one’s life around the things of the world. It is a heart that is blurred or murky from evil thoughts and desires.

Our heart becomes clean through repentance. Repentance is when we confess our need for God. Repentance is acknowledging our sin and asking for God’s forgiveness. Our heart becomes clean when we confess our sin and our desire for God in our life. Repentance is contrition or remorse for sin. The Holy Spirit works in our heart to bring renewal. A clean heart is filled with awe for God. It is humble before God. It respects and honors God.It seeks to worship God. It is grateful to God. It is a heart that is right with God.

We hear it again and again in the psalms. The psalmists say: **“***Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.” Psalm 51. “Test me, O LORD, and try me, examine my heart and my mind.”* “*He who has clean hands and a pure heart.” Psalm 26.* The psalmist says*: “Rejoice in the LORD and be glad, you righteous; sing, all you who are upright in heart!” Psalm 32:11*. It is by God’s grace that we keep our hearts clean.

Jesus is speaking about spiritual sincerity and spiritual discipline and a single-mindedness of devotion toward Him. He is speaking about a faith where Jesus is the center, not our egos. As our minds and hearts are transformed by the Holy Spirit through the grace of God, we draw nearer to becoming who God created us to be. Jesus’ promises that we will see God or experience the presence of God.

The grace of Jesus Christ be with you,

Rev. Alan W. Deuel