

“Single-Minded and Pure in Heart” | Rev. Greg Grooms | October 13, 2019

Exodus 33:15-23

¹⁵ And he said to him, “If your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here. ¹⁶ For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people? Is it not in your going with us, so that we are distinct, I and your people, from every other people on the face of the earth?”

¹⁷ And the LORD said to Moses, “This very thing that you have spoken I will do, for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name.” ¹⁸ Moses said, “Please show me your glory.” ¹⁹ And he said, “I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name ‘The LORD.’ And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. ²⁰ But,” he said, “you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live.” ²¹ And the LORD said, “Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock, ²² and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by. ²³ Then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen.”

James 4:1-8

⁴ What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions^[a] are at war within you?^[b] ² You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. ³ You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. ⁴ You adulterous people!^[c] Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore

Intro Question

What would it be like to be pure in heart?

Background

Studying the beatitudes, we are now at number six: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for they shall see God.” The beatitudes are not a list of do’s and don’ts like the Ten Commandments, but a description of life with Christ, of Christian character, of having the mind of Christ. Consider how you would be described to a stranger by someone you know, how you are perceived to have been living out your beliefs. Would we match up as being pure in heart? To look at this Greg poses the question of what it is to be “pure in heart.” Looking to Mt 5:48, where we are directed that we must be perfect as our heavenly father is, do we even understand what it will be like to be without any blemish as we are promised that we will one day be at God’s hand? Can our imagination even stretch that far on our own?

Discussion

- 1) We live in a society that has to see things. Even Moses wanted to see God’s glory. He actually wanted the unattainable look at the very face of God. Our society wants to have all that is humanly possible, but does not admire purity. It even sees purity as somehow less than fully human – as though fully human, with its shortcomings, is the real ideal. There are contemporary authors who reject purity in favor of experiencing the full range of human expressions and emotions from the basest to the grandest. Even C. S. Lewis, for all of his wonderful imagination, is limited to a physical description of “perfection” in the last of The Chronicles of Narnia when the children, in their roles as Kings and Queens of Narnia are described vividly in their dress and demeanor after being affected by Aslan. They are not described as to how their hearts are. Greg comments that being pure in heart, being perfect as God is perfect, is a journey to the very insides of our own heart, where we know the things we don’t want to know, don’t do what we should and continue to do those things we do not wish to. When my new body is without problems, it is hard to even imagine how I will be as a person, loving God, loving my neighbor as myself, focusing on Christ first and foremost.

whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. ⁵ Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, “He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us”? ⁶ But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” ⁷ Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸ Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

Matthew 5:8, 19:16-22

⁸ “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

¹⁶ And behold, a man came up to him, saying, “Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?” ¹⁷ And he said to him, “Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments.” ¹⁸ He said to him, “Which ones?” And Jesus said, “You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, ¹⁹ Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” ²⁰ The young man said to him, “All these I have kept. What do I still lack?” ²¹ Jesus said to him, “If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” ²² When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

2) If we were described as “pure” by that acquaintance talking with a stranger, would we be flattered or somehow insulted? To be fully human is to be double-minded, having multiple agendas, hidden or not, without a single focus. Like the rich young ruler who wanted to keep his wealth while following Jesus, Woody Allen once described his parents as very Old World. Their values were God and carpeting, wanting the spiritual and the material. Such an approach is not a negative until one chooses “carpeting” and other material things over God.

The Dutch theologian Soren Kierkegaard once said that purity in heart is to will one thing, to be “single-minded.” Purity in heart for a Christian is to will the work of Christ in me, to know God.

After David’s terrible behavior to have Bathsheba - and getting her husband killed to do it - he wrote Psalm 51. There, in verse 10 he recognized his sin and cried out “create in me a clean heart and renew a steadfast spirit within me.” David knew what we are not, but also recognized that the first step is the recognition that we do not have a pure heart. However, unlike other religious belief systems, becoming completely moral, cleaning up our act, is not a requirement to seeing God and having a pure heart. David turned to God first, reflecting the difference of the gospel. As David’s prayer for the divided heart in Psalm 86 says, “teach me your ways, O Lord” and “give me an undivided heart.” That was David’s starting point.

Conclusion

To seek a pure heart, we can turn to God. Double-mindedness always destroys. Such a pursuit of being single-minded as Psalm 86 describes can save. Single mindedness in developing a pure heart, willing the work of Christ, leads to sharing in God’s glory.

Application

How am I double minded? Do I even understand what that truly means? How am I single minded? What am I single minded about? Given my answers, in what direction should I point my life? Where should I start in that pursuit?