

Sermon Title: Want to See God?

Speaker: Jim Harris

Scripture Text: Matt. 5:8 (Sermon on the Mount #7)

Date: 7-19-20

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We've titled this today as a question: "Want to See God?" There *is* a way to do that, and this Beatitude speaks of that. I want to start, though, by having you look with me at a scene from about 700 years before Jesus was born. Isaiah (see 2 Kings 19:2) recounts this from the day when the Lord rather dramatically called him to be His prophet to "Judah" (2 Sam. 5:5; 1 Kings 12:16-17, 20).

It's in Isaiah Chapter 6. He begins this way: "In the year of King Uzziah's death"—that's how we can pinpoint the timing of the beginning of his ministry—"I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple." Isaiah was granted a vision of the throne room of heaven, very much like the Apostle John was granted in Revelation Chapter 4. He describes it this way: "Seraphim stood above Him"—"Seraph" is a high-ranking class of angel; "Seraphim"—you put "im" on the end of many Hebrew words to make them plural. So, "Seraphim"—plural—"stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew." And we say, "Oh, good! Now I know what a Seraph look like!" Yeah, right. "And one called out to another and said, 'Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory' " (vss. 1-3; NASB, and throughout, unless otherwise noted).

So he's allowed to have this vision of the throne room of heaven, and he sees it surrounded by these special angels; that's always the case when you see that in Scripture. What stands out to any person—or, any angel—who sees the throne room of heaven is that this manifests *holiness*. "Holy" means "set apart" (Lev. 26:20; 1 Chr. 23:13; cf. Heb. 7:26). This is "set apart" from *everything* else—there is *nothing* like seeing God in His glory, sitting on His throne. They even cry out: "Holy, holy, holy" back and forth between the different angels—the thrice "holy" *probably* a reflection of the Trinitarian nature of God (Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14). It shows how *profoundly* God is set apart. Another reason for the threefold repetition is likely just the Hebraism of saying something three times to make sure you emphasize it as much as you possibly could. By the way: John's version of this—Revelation Chapter 4, Verse 8—what did he see around the throne? They were saying: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come." (cf. Ezek. 1:1-28; Dan. 7:9-10)

So Isaiah had a chance to see that, and hear the proclamation of the holiness of God; and his reaction was dramatic: Isaiah 6, Verses 4 and 5—"And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke." Again, go ahead and imagine that any way you like; it was more awesome than you *can* imagine. "Then I said, 'Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips and I live among a people of unclean lips.' " Why would he say, "Woe is me"? That means: "I'm *damned!* I'm a *dead man!* Surely this is going to lead to *my death!*" (see Is. 3:11) "Woe is me"—Why?—"for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.' "

Any time in Scripture that a person gets even a *glimpse* of the holiness of God and of His glory, that person is *humbled* and *profoundly* aware of how sinful and unworthy he is to be in the presence of God (e.g. Gen. 3:8-10; 17:3; Ex. 3:6; 20:19; Num. 17:12-13; Jdg. 6:22-23; 13:22; Ezek. 1:28; Matt. 17:6; Mk. 4:41; 5:2, 6-7; Lk. 5:8; Rev. 1:17; 6:16).

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It is *not* like the people who write the phony books now, who say things like, "Hey, I got a chance to go visit God in Heaven, and we talked for a while, and He asked my advice on some things! This is really cool—I'm going to back and write a book!" It's *never* like that.

If the lips are unclean, the heart is unclean (Mk. 7:21-22). "Lips" referring to speech—everything that crosses your lips originates in your heart (Matt. 12:34b), and Isaiah *knew* his own heart. It was not Isaiah, but it was Jeremiah who said: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" (Jer. 17:9, NKJV)—but, believe me, Isaiah knew the sinfulness of his heart.

And immediately, Isaiah, having proclaimed his own damnation—"Woe is me!"—he was immediately granted God's mercy and God's grace. Look at Verses 6 and 7—"Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal in his hand, which he had taken from the altar with tongs." Now, I can't be sure what was in Isaiah's heart, but if I had just said, "I'm a dead man because of what I've just seen," and a six-winged, glorious angel comes at me with a burning coal, I'm thinking, "Well, I know how I'm going to be exiting! I mean, this guy's coming with a *portable incinerator!* And he's coming *right at me!*" Well, what does he do? "He touched my mouth with it"—now, I don't think that would be very pleasant, either, but that's obviously a symbolic act—"and said, 'Behold, this has touched your lips...' " Where did it come from? It came from the holy altar of God! "This has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away and your sin is forgiven."

That's a summary of what salvation is all about! From the holy God comes His *mercy*, so we don't receive what we deserve; and His *grace*, so that we get what we don't deserve (2 Cor. 5:21)—and now, our "sin is forgiven"; our "iniquity is taken away." To stand in the presence of God, and to see Him as He is, requires that your sin has to be taken out of the way (see Is. 59:2)—it has to be removed, it has to be cleansed, it has to be forgiven—and that's what Isaiah received in this symbolic way that showed that God forgave him and cleansed him.

From that day on, Isaiah lived out his commission that he received from the Lord that day; he served as God's prophet for about 53 years. His ministry spanned the reigns of four kings—starting with "the year of King Uzziah's death," and the three that came after him in Judah (see Is. 1:1). This incredibly dramatic scene that Isaiah describes for us is a *perfect* backdrop against which you can understand the Beatitude that is before us today.

As you study the Beatitudes, it takes you to the core of the life-changing realities of knowing Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). You can sugarcoat Christianity all you want, and there's a lot of sugar-frosted versions of Christianity running around. You can say that your goal is to make people feel good about themselves—to make sure that when people leave church, they feel better than when they came—but you can't do that without altering the Gospel (see Jer. 6:14). Now, I don't mean my goal is to make sure you're *miserable* when you leave church—"I don't want *anyone* leaving here *feeling good!*"—that's not the point. The point is: you have to come here on the basis of what Christ has done for you—He's taken care of your *sin* problem (Col. 2:14; 1 Pet. 3:18)!

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The "good news" is "that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3-4). He "died for our sins"—you have to know the *bad news* about your sin problem before the *good news* makes any sense (Rom. 6:23)! So nobody's life is *ever* changed for eternity by dodging the rather blunt proclamations of Jesus (e.g. Matt. 5:20; Lk. 13:3, 5; Jn. 3:3, 5, 18-19; 8:24), and of the whole Bible (e.g. Ps. 7:12; 73:18-20; Prov. 28:13; Ezek. 18:4)—and especially, here in these beginning verses of the Sermon on the Mount.

Consider where we've been so far. It's not hard to review this—each Beatitude is one verse: Matthew 5:3 through 7. So far, we've seen: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the gentle"—the "meek"—"for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy."

What Jesus is saying is: those are the people who are blessed. They *and they alone* are blessed; every one of the pronouns in here, in each promise, is an emphatic pronoun: "Theirs"—*and theirs alone*—"is the kingdom of heaven." "They"—*and they alone*—"shall be comforted." *Nobody else* "shall be satisfied." It says that over and over again.

So He's saying: no one is saved except those who begin by recognizing that, spiritually, they're *bankrupt*. No one is saved except those who see sin for what it is, and it *grieves* them—so when they see *their* sin, it produces "mourning." No one is saved except those who come to God with a heart of meekness—or, "gentleness," as our translation renders it; we accept His standards, and we will be offended *only* by what offends God. No one is saved except those in whom there is a "hunger and thirst for righteousness," because the regenerated heart is a heart that yearns to live more and more accurately as an example of God's righteousness and His forgiveness (see Deut. 30:6; Ezek. 36:25-27); *only* those people will truly be "satisfied." No one is saved except those whose lives are so touched by the mercy of God that they become a conduit of His mercy: forgiven people become forgiving people; people who have received mercy yearn and love to pass along the mercy of God to others.

Now, it's easy to come up with a brand of faith that doesn't make those kinds of demands on people. "You can be comfortable, happy, healthy, wealthy—just do this, and the bigger an offering you put in the plate, the more blessing you're likely to receive from God." You can say that if you want to—it's just that, it's a bunch of manmade lies! We can't do that! (e.g., Deut. 29:19-20; Jer. 7:8-10)

So we're continuing; we're taking it one Beatitude at a time—we're not in a hurry here. I would be just *delighted* if Jesus would take us home before we get to praying, "Your kingdom come, Your will be done"—which is a chapter from now. But understand: Jesus came, following the "forerunner," John the Baptist (Lk. 1:17). John the Baptist had preached the message: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:2)—and he introduced the King, because the King came! And then Jesus says: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:17)—"because *I am the King!* Come and receive

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from Me rest for your souls" (see Matt. 11:28-29). That's what He was asking people to do. And, if you will, I would think that the Sermon on the Mount can very appropriately be described as Jesus's exposition of His own message: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." What does that mean? It means having a righteousness granted by God which exceeds any brand of righteousness you've ever seen (see Phil. 3:9; cf. Matt. 3:15, 17; Rom. 8:33)—we'll get to that in a few more visits to the Sermon on the Mount.

So these Beatitudes, these "blessings," which begin the Sermon on the Mount—remember: they are both *descriptive* of a Christian, and they are also *the goals* of a Christian. This describes what Christ does for us, and it also describes how we want to live (see Deut. 6:5; 30:6; Phil. 2:12-13; Heb. 13:20-21).

I have a favorite cartoon from an article in a Christian magazine I received years ago. Remember, way back in the olden days, they used to put things together—staple them together, glue them together—and mail them to you...they called them "magazines"? This was a Christian magazine, and the cartoon introduced an article. The setting is: a weekly Bible study in somebody's home. The leader says: "So Paul says in Verse 14 that because of his chains, others had been encouraged. What do you think that means?" Student Number 1 says: "Oh, I know! Paul's writing a letter, right? So this is a 'chain letter,' like the one that I just got!" Student Number 2 says: "No, no, no—you're missing the point! I'm a 'chain smoker,' and God is speaking *to me* through this to tell me that I am to encourage *other* chain smokers!" Student Number 3 says: "Well, it reminds me of Aretha Franklin's song 'Chain of Fools.' Maybe Paul means we're supposed to be 'fools for Christ!'" The leader says: "Um...those are very interesting insights, but do you think Paul could simply be referring to his *prison* chains, in his cell in Rome?" And Student Number 2 turns to Student Number 3 and says: "I *told* you this Bible Study wasn't about *practical* living!"—to which Student Number 3 says: "'R-E-S-P-E-C-T' is *another* Aretha song that *really* ministers to me!"

You know what that article was about: *It does not matter* what you or I *think* this or any other passage means, or what insights we might think we find here, until we've done the *harder* work of understanding: "What did *Jesus* mean when He said this? What did Matthew expect the readers of the Gospel of Matthew to understand when he wrote these words?" *That* is our pursuit! *That* is what we need to understand! Oh, and once we do, the *applications* are endless! And, yes—God *will* minister to your heart through the Word, but *not* until you have *understood* what the Word means.

So today, we set our sights on just the sixth Beatitude. One whole verse, same outline for every Beatitude: Who is Blessed? and, What Does The Blessing Include? Pretty straightforward statement: Matthew Chapter 5, Verse 8. Who is Blessed? "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." You need to be "pure in heart" (cf. Ps. 24:4).

Now, the purity that you need is not innate in *you* (Jb. 15:14; 25:4; Prov. 20:9); this is purity that only God can give (Jn. 13:8; cf. Acts 15:9). You can't make it by *trying real hard* to overcome your weaknesses—that will not achieve the righteousness that you need to be able to stand in the presence of a perfectly holy and righteous God (Ps. 130:3).

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You can't achieve it by doing good works of righteousness, in the hope that you're going to earn enough merit badges so that, in the end, there will be more on the "good" side of your ledger than on the "bad" side of your ledger when you stand before God and He says: "Well, it was a close vote, but 51 percent of your works were good; only 49 percent were bad—you're in!" (see Gal. 3:10; Jas. 2:10) You can't manufacture this by putting on outward displays of doing pious things that make other people think, "Oooh! Wow! Isn't *he* spiritual!" (see Matt. 23:28; cf. Prov. 30:12) That's not how you get this.

No amount of religious fervor can produce the kind of purity that this is talking about. It is purity in "the inner man" (Rom. 7:22; 2 Cor. 4:16; Eph. 3:16; cf. Rom. 2:29)—purity before God, who both *desires* that kind of purity—*requires* that kind of purity—and makes it possible for you. You have this sin problem—how could you *possibly* stand in the presence of a perfectly holy God? *Only* if you have a righteousness *not your own*, credited to your account (Rom. 4:3-5); *only if* the penalty that is intended for you has been taken by *someone else* (Gal. 3:13; 2 Cor. 5:21; cf. Is. 53:5-8; Matt. 20:28).

*That's* the message of the Gospel. It is God doing for you what He did for Isaiah. You may not have a seraph coming at you with a burning coal, but you have been "made righteous" (Rom. 5:19; cf. Ps. 51:11; Acts 26:18; Rom. 3:24).

It's the purity that David came to understand; he described it when he faced the reality of his own sinful heart and his own wicked deeds. David says this in Psalm 51:6-8—"Behold, You desire truth in the innermost being, and in the hidden part You will make me know wisdom." He's saying: "I'm not going to crawl there on my own. I'm going to trust You to give this to me."

He continues: "Purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean..." Now, I don't have any recipes for "hyssop"—I don't know if you even know what "hyssop" is. The "hyssop" branch was used to apply the blood of the sacrifice, in certain situations (e.g. Ex. 12:22; Lev. 14:4-7; Heb. 9:19; cf. 1 Pet. 1:2). So he says: "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness, let the bones which You have broken rejoice." David said that when he was convicted of his sin, it was *as if* his bones were *breaking* within him; he was *crushed* by the understanding of the sinfulness of his sin (see Rom. 7:13). And he says, "God, my only hope is that *You* wash me, *You* make me clean!"

This is purity related to the *heart*—"Blessed are the pure *in heart*." And the only way to have a pure heart is...well, by a miracle! It *has* to be the work of God! It's done by God's grace. The word "heart"—obviously the crucial word here—is one of several words in the Bible, used in both the Old Testament and the New Testament; both the Hebrew word for "heart" and the Greek word for "heart" theologically mean the same thing; it's one of several words that are used to describe the nonphysical part of you. You have your body, and then you have "the *real* you," if you will, which one day will shed this body and receive a resurrection body (1 Cor. 15:53). "Heart" is the broadest of the words that describe those things. It's a synonym for "spirit" (e.g., Ex. 25:21; Deut. 2:30; Ps. 77:6; Prov. 17:22), it's a synonym for "soul" (e.g., Deut. 28:65; 1 Sam. 2:35; 1 Chr. 22:19).

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And yet, it's distinct. One commentator says the "heart" is the "real you"—it's the *center* of everything. In our world, we use the word "heart" to describe our emotions, but Biblically speaking, the "heart" is the "control center" for all of your decision-making and all of your prioritizing (e.g. Gen. 6:5; Ex. 7:13-14; Ps. 27:8; 33:11; Matt. 18:35; Mk. 2:6; Rom. 2:15; Rom. 6:17). We are blessed to live in a generation where we have a new analogy we can use: your "heart" is your "CPU"—your "central processing unit." The "CPU" in your computer is the thing that makes everything else work; no program will run without the CPU operating it. Your "heart" operates all of the "stuff" that is "you." That's the significance of "heart."

Now remember again the historical context of the Sermon on the Mount. If you were to go up to anyone present on the day that Jesus preached this sermon, if you were to do "man in the street" interviews, and you said, "Would you point out to me who are the most righteous ones around here?"—the person would start looking around to find the nearest Pharisee, because the Pharisees were the ones who proclaimed themselves righteous (Jn. 9:34; Rom. 10:3), they controlled what was taught in the synagogues, they controlled who got to be a rabbi. Their brand of religion was built on a foundation of religious displays of fervor (Acts 26:5)—keeping external morality down to the smallest minutiae (Matt. 23:23-24). They *rigorously* kept a huge list of "do's" and "don'ts" (Mk. 7:3-4; cf. Col. 2:21-23).

That kind of religion is *very impressive*. When you see somebody that zealous, you say, "Wow!" And you know what God thinks of it? *Nothing*. Well, actually, He *does* think more than nothing—it is *abominable* to Him. Look how it's described over in Luke Chapter 16. Jesus had mentioned some things about money, and then we pick it up at Luke 16:14—"Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money"—that's interesting; he just casually puts that in there; that was *part* of their motivation for their religiosity—"were listening to all these things and were scoffing at Him. And He said to them"—here's Jesus's summary of Pharisee-style religion: "You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God." Now, that doesn't mean that there is nothing that is acceptable to mankind that isn't also acceptable to God, but in the context here, He's talking about where you think righteousness is. They were spit-shined on the outside, and Jesus says that's like a very brightly-painted white sepulcher that is full of stinky bones on the "inside" (Matt. 23:27).

You've *got* to deal with the heart. You can never make a heart pure by working from the outside in—it doesn't work that way. No one is ever made more holy by people putting rules on them, to say: "Here's what you have to do to be holy." Now, you might get some external compliance, *but that won't deal with the sin* that is in a heart.

Let God's Word wash over you a little bit with this; let me just flash some example passages by you. Psalm 24:3-4—"Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? And who may stand in His holy place?" In other words: Who can actually ascend to the temple and worship God appropriately? "He who has clean hands"—that's symbolic of what you do—"and a pure heart"—that's symbolic of your motivations and your thoughts on the inside—

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"who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood and has not sworn deceitfully." It takes God's work to change the heart. You can't just do it from the outside in.

Psalm 51:10—we stopped a couple verses before this in Psalm 51. What does David say when he cries out to God? "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me." Like I said last time: Isn't it cool that the ones who wrote the psalms knew so many of our worship ditties? We put them to music—*because* it helps us to remember them, *because* they're so important!

I don't know this one musically, but: Psalm 73, Verse 1—"Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart!" In other words, they understand: "I do all of those sacrifices because that's how I symbolize what You have done for me, what You do spiritually." (see Heb. 9:11-12; cf. Gen. 22:8; Deut. 32:43)

Psalm 125, Verse 4—"Do good, O Lord, to those who are good, and to those who are upright in their hearts."

Jesus knew all of those Scriptures—and *more*, by the way—when He said, "Blessed are the pure in heart," but you know what? It doesn't stop with the Old Testament. *Exactly* the same thing is said in the New Testament: Second Timothy 2:22—"Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart." How do you get a "pure heart"? How did David get it? "*Create in me* a clean heart, O God; and *renew* a right spirit within me" (Ps. 51:10, KJV). "*I* know what's in here—I know I can't do it on my own. I need You to do it." (see Titus 3:5)

First Peter Chapter 1, Verses 22 and 23—"Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another *from the heart*, for you have been born again..." As Paul said: "You were dead in your trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1). Dead people are really bad at responding! They don't do anything. "You were dead...But God...made [you] alive" (vss. 4-5). You've been "born again"—therefore now, "from the heart," you can do things that glorify God (Rom. 8:3-4).

Toward the end of his ministry, Paul left Timothy in the city of Ephesus; and he said, "Here's what I want you to do: I want you to correct certain things—stop certain people from teaching strange doctrines." And then he says this, in First Timothy 1:5—"But the goal of our instruction is love *from a pure heart* and a good conscience and a sincere faith." Notice the connection there between "heart" and "conscience." It's all connected to the inner working of the Spirit of God in your heart, soul, mind, will, conscience—it all fits together (see Deut. 30:6; Ezek. 36:26-27; Rom. 8:14; Phil. 2:13).

So, as to purity of the heart: you come to God; you cry out to Him; He purifies your heart (Acts 15:9). *He* solves the problem of sin that you could do nothing about on your own. Then, *and only then*, are you able to *genuinely* walk in purity—*not* just putting on a *display*, but doing it because you love the Lord, who has made you right on the inside (see 1 Jn. 5:3; cf. Ps. 50:15; 116:12).

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Hebrews 10:22—one of the invitations to the Gospel in the New Testament: "Let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water." Several different word pictures there, all to describe: "I need You to do this in order for me to be able to walk in purity." Purity of heart begins with you being—interesting terminology—"sprinkled clean from an evil conscience" by the blood of Christ. The blood was "sprinkled on the altar" (Ex. 24:6)—that was how you symbolically said that the death of that animal was to cover the sin of the one who brought the offering, or the high priest offering it on behalf of the whole nation on the Day of Atonement (Ex. 30:10; Lev. 16:34; Heb. 9:7).

So your heart is "purified...by faith" (Acts 15:9; 1599 Geneva Bible, NIV), and you're then able to think about pure things, and then your "conscience" can be aligned with God's Word—the Scriptures (Heb. 9:14). Your conscience is your alarm system; it's that built-in thing that God gave you. The word "conscience" is literally "con" ("with") and "science" (knowledge); it compares the knowledge of *this* thing with *this* thing. Here's what I'm doing; here's what the truth is; and I have to compare the two, and adjust accordingly (see Rom. 2:15). We can have "an evil conscience" that lies to us, but we need to be having a "good conscience" (Heb. 13:18), a healthy conscience—where our conscience matches up with God's Word (Rom. 12:2). That's part of the purity that He builds into us.

So, Who is Blessed? Matthew Chapter 5, Verse 8—"Blessed are the pure in heart." What Does The Blessing Include? "For they shall see God." Now, I'm going to have to give you a little bit of temporal whiplash here. "For they shall see God"—that's the promise that comes with this blessing.

Now, I trust, if you're here this morning, there's a *very* good chance: you've heard the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. You have said, "I need to be forgiven. Lord, please forgive me." You've called out to Him, you've turned from your own ways to His ways (Is. 55:7), and you've given your heart to Him (Prov. 23:26). How many of you saw the throne room of Heaven, with the Lord on His throne, high and lifted up, and the foundations trembling, and seraphim flying around? *You didn't see God*, right? Not in *that* sense. So, what *is* this promise?

Well, first, let me mention: exactly the same thing is true here that is true in all the other Beatitudes; the pronoun is emphatic—"they"—"they *and they alone* shall see God." Nobody is going to see God unless they have a pure heart. Nobody is going to have a pure heart unless God purifies it. Nobody is going to experience God's purification unless they call out to Him for His grace and His forgiveness.

But to see God—in a *literal* sense—that's reserved for the future. I would say it's going to come in three phases. The first phase will be when you are "absent from the body" and "present with the Lord" (2 Cor. 5:8, NKJV). What are we going to see? What are we going to know? I don't know. I know that in Revelation 6, there are some souls of people that are going to be martyred during the Tribulation—they're under the altar, they're talking. What are we going to see? I don't know exactly what that will be, but that's one sense in which you will be "with the Lord" (see Jn. 14:3; Heb. 12:23).

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Then there's the intermediate stage beyond that, when Jesus—who *is* "God" (Titus 2:13; cf. Col. 2:9; Heb. 1:8; 2 Pet. 1:1)—returns and sets up His kingdom on Earth (Matt. 19:28; 25:31; Rev. 20:4-6). He will reign on the throne in Jerusalem (Zech. 14:3-9). We will see the risen Christ here, ruling on Earth. And we get to be part of that, too! (see Rev. 2:26-27; 3:21; 5:10). Isn't that cool? So you'll "see God" in that sense.

And then, *ultimately*, when are we going to "see God"? Well, the "new heaven" and the "new earth" (Rev. 21:1). We'll be *dwelling* with Him forever there (Rev. 3:12).

Now, while that is true—and that's in the future—there's *also* a sense of *right now*. There is also—one writer that I was looking at this week described it as "the *inward* vision," if you will. In other words, a better way might be to say: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they *and they alone* will *understand and perceive* who God is." To walk with Jesus opens spiritual eyes hitherto blinded by unbelief (Eph. 4:18). It's when you're talking about something or you're studying something or you're reading something and, you're not grasping it, and *then* you say, "Oh! *I see!*" You don't mean, "I *visually* see something that I didn't see before." You mean: "I *understand*."

In Second Corinthians Chapter 4, Paul describes the effect of the gospel this way: "Even if our gospel is veiled"—in other words, "hard to see through, hard to see, hard to understand"—"it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." Isn't that interesting terminology? "The god of this world has blinded"—not the eyes, but "blinded the *minds*..." So apart from Christ, you can't fully *comprehend* (Matt. 11:27; cf. Lk. 24:45). And so in *that* sense—"Ah! *I see!*"

The disciples spent three and a half years with Jesus; and then, the night before He went to the Cross, He celebrated the Passover meal; and then He had that *wonderful* time of teaching with them that we have recorded in John 14, 15, and 16. In part of that, Jesus says this, in John 14:19—"After a little while the world will no longer see Me"—why? He's going to die, He's going to rise again, He's going to ascend; nobody in the world will be seeing Him. He continues: "But you will see Me; because I live, you will live also." And then, as He goes on and teaches further that night, He explains: "You're going to have the Spirit within you! He's going to 'guide you into all the truth' (Jn. 16:14)." Well, it's the same Holy Spirit that we have described in First Corinthians Chapter 2 as giving us the ministry of illumination (vss. 10-16, cf. 1 Jn. 2:20, 27).

One of the commentators on this passage puts it this way: "Purity of heart cleanses the mental vision." I like that! [Satan] *blinds* the minds; [Jesus] *opens* the minds—"cleanses the mental vision." "The pure in heart see mysteries of grace, mysteries of love and holiness which are hidden from the eyes of the unclean. Seeing God is becoming acquainted with Him, sensing His acceptance, comprehending what it means to be forgiven and made over. The pure in heart are aware of a reality which most people miss. They are sure of God." You understand when the eyes of your mind have been opened (Eph. 1:18). I love that mixing of those metaphors.

Sermon Title: Want to See God?

Speaker: Jim Harris

Scripture Text: Matt. 5:8 (Sermon on the Mount #7)

Date: 7-19-20

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Now, I have to add what I promised you—that temporal whiplash. Yes, this is in the future—but, yes, we have it now. But don't focus *so much* on the now that you forget the future! I am *really* looking forward to seeing God in person! Look at this: First John 3:2—"Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is." That's like Paul describing "all who have loved His appearing" (2 Tim. 4:8). *Oh*, I want to see Him! Won't that be *spectacular*?

How about going way back in time: Job, one of the most famous passages in the gigantic Book of Job: Job 19:25 through 27. It's Job speaking. He says: "As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives"—now, that's pretty interesting for an Old Testament guy way, way, way *before* the Redeemer came to Earth and lived; but he knows that God is his Redeemer. He continues: "And at the last He will take His stand on the earth." Wow! That sounds like he had read the Book of Revelation! Well, no, not exactly (cf. Jude 14). "Even after my skin is destroyed, yet from my flesh I shall see God; whom I myself shall behold, and whom my eyes will see and not another. My heart faints within me!" That's a Hebrew way of saying: "That *blows me away*! I just get weak-kneed when I think about that!" Do you understand what that implies? *Job understood resurrection*—without all the explanation of First Corinthians 15!

Or how about Psalm 17:15—"As for me, I shall behold Your face in righteousness; I will be satisfied with Your likeness when I awake." So, yeah—now you can say: "Wow! I see! I *get it*! I *understand*! Thank You, God, for Your grace! Thank You for opening my eyes! Thank You for granting me faith and repentance! Thank You for bringing me from death to life in Christ! Oh, but I *still* look forward to seeing You in clarity!" As much as we see now, as much as we understand now, as much as we comprehend now—we're still looking forward. First Corinthians 13:12—"For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known." "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they"—and they alone—"will see God."

So, how's your heart? Is the yearning of your heart to be pure? Or do you think in terms of, "How much can I get away with and still not be impure?" Are you yearning for purity? Do you understand your spiritual poverty? You have this sin problem, and you can't fix it! Do you mourn over your sin? I know that you still do what you *don't* mean to do, and I know that you don't always succeed at doing what you *do* mean to do. Does that cause you to mourn, and cry out to God all the more, and stand in His grace every day?

Does it make you meek? Does it make you come gently to God in that way? Are you hungry and thirsting for righteousness? Has He cultivated in you—have you *allowed* Him to cultivate in you—that desire to know Him better and better, like hungry and thirsting? Has His mercy turned you into the kind of person who is a conduit through whom His mercy flows to other people, and you minister His goodness by His grace, bathed in the truth of His gospel? Are you "pure in heart" by His grace?

I can't see your heart, but I sure can invite you to spend time with the Savior who does.

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Let's pray:

*Father, thank You for this, Your Word. Thank You for the fact that it is "living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword," that it lays open our soul and our spirit before You, that it penetrates our hearts. I know only my own heart, and even that, I don't know perfectly. I don't know every heart here, Lord, but You do. So, please hear the cries of our hearts. Where there are things that need to be confessed, bring confession. Where there are things that need attention for changing priorities, shifting attitudes—have Your way in each of us, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*