

Matthew 5:8

Open My Eyes That I May See

There is something mysteriously majestic about a mammoth mountain of ice floating across the sea. Icebergs near Antarctica can be as big as Sicily, the island off the coast of Italy and the largest in the Mediterranean. Did you know that we can only see about 12% of the iceberg? The majority of the iceberg is under the water. This is where we get our phrase “tip of the iceberg.”¹

Which brings us to an important point for consideration this morning, a point that Jesus has literally brought to us in our text this morning. Because Jesus has come to us we can say in a definitive way what was not possible before his coming: “There is more to this world than meets the eye.” There is a reality that is beyond us, a reality that has come to us. Everything is not merely what we can see, Jesus tells us this. Let’s read the text to get to it this morning.

READ TEXT

Jesus has come to tell us the way to see God. Stop there for a moment and let that sink in. One day we will see God. One day this world that is filled full of doubt and blasphemy will be filled with those who see God. Eternity will be us keeping eternal festival before the face of God. We will be in his presence for forever! This is what we mean when we say seeing the face of God - being in his presence. All will see God, but not all will be with him for forever. It would be dreadful to just have a glimpse of God, to see beauty, to feel the warmth of holiness, and then to be removed from his presence into the cold ugly of hell. But that will be the experience of many. I believe it was Billy Graham who said that hell will be made more terrible by those entering there having as their last memory the splendor of God and knowing that they will never be with him. Everyone will see God, but only some will be in the glory of his presence for forever. Listen to Isaiah 66

Isaiah 66:1-2

Thus says the LORD:

*“Heaven is my throne, and the earth
is my footstool;*

*What is the house that you would build for me,
and what is the place of my rest?*

*All these things my hand has made, and
so all these things came to be,
declares the LORD.*

But this is the one to whom I will look:

*He who is humble and contrite in spirit
and trembles at my word. (ESV)*

¹ <http://www.nationalgeographic.org/encyclopedia/iceberg/>

We want the look of God so that we can see him. Today from our text we learn the way to seeing God comes through a pure heart. But what does our Lord mean?

Two Truths this morning from this passage. Two truths that prayerfully will leave our hearts desiring to see God.

1. Only God Can Give Sight to the Blind

The passage that we read in our Scripture reading this morning, Genesis 3, tells the story of the day that humanity lost their sight. Humanity went from walking with God in the cool of the day, listening to his voice, to disregarding his Word and having their eyes opened to see their own nakedness. Suddenly their new vision brought shame and regret. They were without clothes before, but they were not naked. We have a hard time seeing the difference even in the way that we speak, but it refers to an innocence that was lost the moment that humanity chose to reject the provision of the Lord and reach for what our own hands could provide. The proof of their shame comes from their attempt to change the inside by covering the outside. They saw their nakedness and tried to cover their nakedness with fig leaves. Suddenly instead of desiring to be with God they are terrified of God. Instead of walking with God they hide from God. And this story is the story of all of us.

We were born into this world removed from the presence of God. Born without the ability to see. We think that we can see, but we are blind. Any sight that we think that we have is nothing more than blindness. So we spend our life amassing for ourselves righteousness, doing little things that make us believe that we are alright but in the end we are doing nothing more than washing the outside of a tomb full of dead men's bones. In reality we are no better than Adam and Eve who thought that fig leaves could restore what was lost. All have a desire for righteousness. But none know how to get what they seek. This is what Solomon meant when he said, *He (God) has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end. (Ecclesiastes 3:11, ESV)*

As a result, the world is filled with people who were created to live in community with God, but who are unable to be in communion with God. Our world is filled with people who dream for more but who have no idea how to achieve the more, or even what the more that they seek is. This is why there is so much strife and struggle in the world. In the words of Solomon again, *See, this alone I found, that God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes. (Ecclesiastes 7:29, ESV)*. The world seeks to achieve satisfaction outside of God and many, most, truly believe that they can achieve satisfaction outside of God. But the best that they can do is fill the hole in their heart with air and wind.

Jesus describes the condition that he has come into as he speaks in parables later on in Matthew. The disciples wanted to know why he spoke in parables. Listen to his response. Jesus said, *this is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear... (Matthew 13:13)*. It is not that man does not have the capacity to see or to hear. Sin has left mankind blind and deaf. We don't want to overreact against the world and form some pessimism against the deaf and the blind. Jesus wants to make sure that we see that any other striving outside of him, no matter how noble, is ultimately worthless. So he comes to us to direct our paths to what matters. To direct our paths to Who it is that matters. We believe in common grace, but we also believe in total depravity. We believe that man was created in the image of God, but we also believe that that image has been damaged but not erased.

The intense reality that we find ourselves in is beyond dispute. Man has been removed from the presence of God and has been barred from access to him. We have been blinded by our own desires so much so that we no longer have communion with God. We need salvation to come to us. We are blind, we cannot see. We need God to come to us.

Thanks be to God that Jesus has come to us. This is the gospel. This is the story of God's rescue mission to save us. The story of God bringing us back to him. The Father has sent the Son to save the world! Jesus has come to shine his own glorious light into our darkness to give us sight. Listen to John. *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known. (John 1:14, 18, ESV)*

This is exactly what we are seeing in the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus has come into our blindness as the light of the world, and just as the brightness is too much for us to bear at first, he comes to us and levels us and directs our gaze to himself. He comes to prepare our eyes to see God. Growing up I would much rather have Mom wake me than Dad. Mom had a gentle touch. She would come in and rest her hand on my back and say, "Time to get up." Dad's approach was different. On his way past my room he would open the door, cut on the light, and say from a distance, "Get up!" The worse part of it was when he cut the light on. My eyes who had been enjoying darkness suddenly received light. It took a while for my eyes to adjust. This is what Jesus is doing before we get into the meat of the Sermon of the Mount. He has these blessed statements that are meant to allow our eyes to adjust to his light.

Think about the Beatitudes so far. There is nothing greater than seeing God, but seeing God does not come until Beatitude number 6. I believe seeing God is the entire goal of life. If this beatitude is the goal of all the others, then why does it come where it does? Let me do my best to sketch out what our Lord is saying to us.

As we continue we best continue humbly. The worst thing we can do is read our own meaning into the text. The best thing, and hopefully what we are doing now, is read the text as our Lord intends. So as we go forward we do so humbly with a true desire to hear God.

The first three beatitudes tell God's work on us. Skip over number 4 for just a moment. Five through seven tell God's work through us. Number 8 tells the world's reaction to God's work in and through us. The fourth beatitude is where we see both God's work on us and through us.

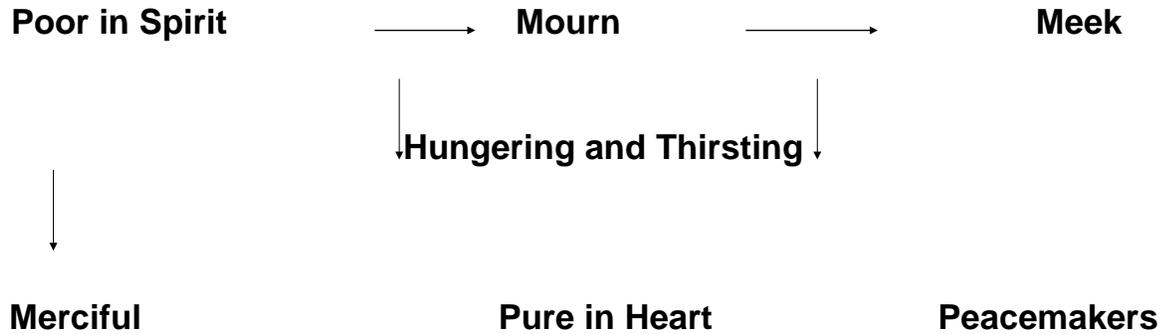
1-3 - God's Work on Us - impoverished, mournful, meek

4 -Hungering and Thirsting is

5-7 - God's Work Through Us - merciful, pure, peaceful the center of the Beatitudes

8 - The World's Reaction to Us - Persecuted

The context tells us who the pure in heart are. Follow the context. Follow the way the Lord is linking this golden chain of blessedness together. The poor in spirit are those who are merciful. The meek are the peacemakers. Those who mourn are the pure in heart. All of these are hungering and thirsting for righteousness. All of these are persecuted by the world. All are blessed by the Lord. To all of these belong the Kingdom of Heaven. If I were to diagram this is would look something like this:



The pure in heart are those who see their condition. The pure in heart are those who realize their only hope comes from divine intervention. The pure in heart are those who wholeheartedly trust in the Lord. The pure in heart are those who realize that only God can give sight to the blind.

Jesus has come to open the eyes of the blind. Our problem is not an environmental problem. There is no merit in saying, "If things were different at home, or at my job, if I just hadn't lost that love one, or if I had a little more time, then we would be different." Remember that Adam and Eve fell from the grace of God in a garden of paradise. Our problem is that we need a new heart. Jesus has come to give us a new heart. The way that he gives us a new heart is by giving his very own life so that we can have life. He gives his heart for us. He takes our sins and makes them his very own. He takes our burden to the cruel cross of Calvary and suffers and dies alone. And when we realize this we have no choice but to say, How marvelous, how wonderful, because now we can see, now understand the depths of his love for us.

You see, number two this morning:

2. When God Opens Our Eyes, We See Him

There is nothing greater than seeing God. There is nothing greater than knowing that we have this hope awaiting us of one day seeing God. I wonder what it will be like. My life is filled with this anticipation and longing of seeing my Savior face to face in his glory. So many people think that one day when they see God they are going to want to know this or that. But I think we will react like John when he saw Jesus in his vision on the isle of Patmos. *When I say him, I fell at his feet as dead.* (John 1:17)

The way to see God is clear. We first have to have a pure heart. The heart is vitally important. The heart refers not to the organ that pumps blood so much as it refers to the very center of our being. What it is that makes us who we are. The heart refers to what it is that guides and directs our lives. Christ has come to make what was impure pure. And he does so three ways:

- Judicially - we are declared righteous at the moment of salvation
- Progressively - as we walk with the Holy Spirit
- Finally - in the end when we experience resurrection where literally he gives us a new heart that will never know a beat outside of the rhythm of his presence

Christianity is more than intellectual ascent. Christianity is about God making all things new.

Christianity is about God taking a heart who was beating to the rhythm of ungodliness and shocking it back to beat into the rhythm that it was created for - to always do what is pleasing to the Father.

This is what purity of heart means. Purity heart means that we have an undistracted devotion to God. Purity of heart means that we are so overwhelmed by seeing God that nothing in this life, no matter how shiny it may appear, can compare with what God has for us who love him (1 Corinthians 2:9).

Jesus has promised that the pure in heart see God. We believe him, we trust in him, and so we desire to walk with him. We realize that we now see through a glass dimly, but one day we will see him face to face (1 Corinthians 13:12). And for right now, limited sight is better than no sight at all. We are like Moses, we are faithfully enduring as seeing him who is invisible. (Hebrews 11:27) We are going through this life believing what Jesus said, trusting in his providing of what he said, and praying with Jonathan Edwards, "Lord stamp eternity on my eyeballs." In other words, we are praying:

Be Thou my Vision, O Lord of my heart
Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art
Thou my best Thought, by day or by night
Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light

The best way to say the way that we who have received this sight not live is in 1 John 2:28 - 3:3 *And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming. If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.*

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure. (ESV)

How about you? Have you seen the light? Lay yourself bare before the Lord. Ask him to show you, he knows more about your heart than you do anyway (Psalm 139:23). Don't dwell in darkness, come to the light. Feel the warmth of the Son for the first time.

We know who will see God. As Scripture says:

Psalm 24:3-6

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.
He will receive blessing from the LORD and
righteousness from the God of his salvation.
Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek
the face of the God of Jacob. Selah (ESV)

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

I am ready, are you?