

FOLLOWERS OF THE WAY: "Hearts of Purity."
St. Matthew 5:8

I have ruminated over this 6th Beatitude: "*Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.*" What does it mean? In our sensory-loaded culture, it might mean to have a mind free of inappropriate sexual thoughts. As an adolescent, I was terrified that I would never see God!

Then, in college, I read Søren Kierkegaard's book, "*Purity of Heart Is to Will One Thing.*" Fantastic, perhaps I may see God yet! I simply had to discern what this 'one thing' was, and go after it.

As I grew older, I discovered that I had some difficulty recognizing people I had known a long time. And, of course, I was too embarrassed to ask for their names! I began to wonder if it was early onset Alzheimer's disease. To assuage my ego, I decided that it was my friends that had changed, not me. They had changed their hair color, or had different colored contact lenses, or they had their faces lifted! That explained everything.

As I thought it through I realized my *focus* was off. My friend's eyes that had been so dazzling blue were now dim and red-lined with grief; this had changed her face so drastically. I was confused by things that did not matter and distracted from those that do.

Jesus was a perceptive person. It was the reason he said on that mountainside one day, that we would not see God until the focus of our mind is on what he wants of us. Not until he sees the same smile of compassion, and infinite love on our faces will we see God.

One translation of this Beatitude reads, "*Happy are you! Congratulations to you! You are blessed, you who are single-hearted, for with your heart-eyes you shall see God.*" What a tremendous gift God has given everyone: to see the truth with our heart-eyes. But not everyone sees. In chapter 13 verses 16-17 of this gospel, Jesus says "*But blessed are your eyes for they see. I say to you that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see the things which you see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which you hear, and have not heard them.*"

Jesus desires us to hear the one thing that matters the most in this life: his teachings. If we listen and look, we will hear his voice calling us to learn his wisdom. And from this, we will see what God is like because God is like Jesus. As we hear Jesus' voice, we listen to the voice of God. When we see through our heart-eyes, healed by God's love, we are enabled to see people through the lens of Jesus' love.

For the past 2000 years, it is this voice that has been transmitted down the halls of history. Jesus has been calling us to look and see, to focus on his teaching, to walk in his footsteps. Therefore, those who are 'pure in heart' are those who are focused on Jesus. He is both our model and our teacher.

Jesus is not trapped in the pursuit of money and things (recall his blessing on the poor).

Jesus is the one who has compassion on those who suffer (remember his blessing on those who weep).

Jesus is open to growth and change (recall his blessing on the meek).

Jesus is focused on the will of God (remember his blessing on those who hunger and thirst after righteousness).

Jesus is the one who demonstrates what love is (recall his blessing on the merciful).

Jesus is also the one who is peaceful and remains steady, when confronted with persecution.

Only the fully Human One can be such a teacher and model for us and the world. And, in my contemplation of this 6th Beatitude, I try to ignore the many definitions of who is a Christian and who is not. And, I refuse to debate who is the better believer. Rather, I want to address a different group of questions.

How well do I understand the values Jesus is teaching? To what degree do I put these values into action in my life? Am I modeling these values in my relationships? For me to answer in the affirmative, I must focus my vision and attention on Jesus. My goal is to be a Jesus person.

Someone one once said that if you want to know what is most important to you, look at your checkbook. What we focus our time and our treasure on reveal what is most important to us.

"Blessed are the pure in heart," for they shall keep their eyes focused on Jesus.

"Blessed are the pure in heart," for they shall listen to the words of Jesus.

"Blessed are the pure in heart," for they shall see God. So may it be for us. Alleluia. Amen.