



St. Paul Evangelical Community Church (SPECC)

Worship Address : Cerritos High School Auditorium
12500 E. 183rd St., Cerritos, CA 90703
(Enter at Bloomfield, across Heritage Park)

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December 27, 2009

Theme: Blessed Are the Pure in Heart

Text: Matthew 5:8

This is the last Lord's Day of 2009. For me the year has literally flown by. The marking of a new year is a time to reflect upon how we have lived in the year that has passed. Perhaps we have achieved some of the goals that we have set. Perhaps we have failed to achieve other goals. The approach of New Year's Day, should cause us to reflect upon the goals we want to set for the year 2010. There is one goal that all of us can reach—to be pure in heart. This is a goal that all believers can reach with the help of the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. What does it mean to be pure in heart? What does Jesus mean when he says that the pure in heart will "see God?" For now let me say that this has a fulfillment in the present and in the future.

The ultimate goal of a human life is to see God. This is why we were created. This why we exist. But sin had made it so that God is hidden from our eyes—unless we become pure in heart. This is obviously and awesome privilege. How do we accomplish this? The first thing we can do is to accept God's value system. This means that we will adopt His system of spirituality and morality. This means that we must reject our own system of values and the system that the world presents to us. This is a spiritual battle which we can only win with God's help. We must fight off impure and sinful thoughts and feelings. As we fight we must draw upon God's power to help us keep our hearts clean.

Second, we can draw close to God. Jesus' brother, James wrote, "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you..." Then he calls us to wash our hands and purify our hearts and to mourn for our sin. When we do, God will lift us up. God is not waiting for us at the end of life; he is here right now to receive us. The apostle John wrote, "Beloved, now we are the children of God!" As we draw close to God, we must learn to obey him. This can be one of the toughest steps. We will not see God in the sense of understanding Him until we learn to live a life of obedience. We must believe that God has our best interests at heart; and we must obey Him even when we don't understand. Obedience begins with a heart that says, "Yes!" to God.

As we strive to be obedient, we must constantly seek God's power for transformation. We must understand that we cannot keep our hearts clean without God's power. When we sin, we must practice the spiritual discipline of confession—asking God to forgive the specific sins that we have committed. The apostle John wrote that when we confess our sins, "...He is faithful and just to forgive our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Without God's cleansing power, we will be unable to maintain pure hearts. Finally, if we want to be pure in heart, we must strive to be the same inside as we are outside. In other words, we must not be hypocrites. Jesus criticized the Pharisees for



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looking good on the outside, but being filled with hypocrisy and wickedness on the inside. We must strive to have a heart that is soft and responsive to God so that our good works are not just a show that we put on for people to see.

Being pure in heart means more than adopting God's value system. I must get in line with what God is doing in the world. He is already establishing His kingdom in the hearts of those who believe. Although the Kingdom of God is bigger than the Church, it includes the Church. Every local church is an outpost of the Kingdom of God. When we line our lives up with His purposes we "see" Him more clearly. A commitment to God's Kingdom means a commitment to the Church. In that commitment, we must remember that the Church belongs to Jesus Christ and not to us. Within the Church we must also adopt a group mentality. God calls us as individuals, but He calls us into a community—the Church. Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans: "...in Christ, we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others." Finally, we must exercise our spiritual gift or gifts. Scripture says that every believer has at least one: "Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good."

I want to conclude by saying something about this matter of seeing God. Scripture teaches that we "see" God already in this age. But it is also clear that we will literally see God face-to-face in the future, when Christ returns. The apostle Paul wrote in his first letter to the Corinthians: "Now we see but a poor reflection, as in a mirror; but then we will see face to face. Now I know in part; then I will know fully even as I am fully known." We see God already, in a sense, when we adopt His value system and work for the progress of the Kingdom. But in the future we will see him literally—face to face.

This means three things for my life and ministry: (1) I will strive, with God's help, to keep my heart clean before Him. (2) God's future promises an eternal home in a new heavens and a new earth. This should be my motivation for keeping my heart clean in this age. (3) God's future is offered to the pure in heart. They will have the unsurpassable privilege of seeing God face to face. We will be entirely cleansed from sin and we will live forever in God's presence.