

Sun., Feb. 7: (In person worship!) Holy Communion

Memory Verse: "Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God." -Matthew 5:7-8

Message: **Momentum (The Beatitudes) #6: Merciful and Pure Heart** -Pastor David

Sermon Scripture: Matthew 5:7-8

Reading of Scripture: James 4:4-10

Blurb: We come to the advanced "rings" of The Beatitudes: showing mercy and having a pure heart. God doesn't want us just to be saved. He wants us to become like He is. That means being merciful and pure in heart. This may seem impossible for us, but God gives us the Holy Spirit to work this maturity in us. This Sunday come ready to enrol in advanced discipleship training!

[Recorded Worship Beginning]

WELCOME -Pastor Andrew

Holy Communion: gather bread and juice at home for later in the service.

MEMORY VERSE -Pastor Andrew

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied." - Matthew 5:6

WORSHIP MUSIC SET -Sanctify

For God Alone (Psalm 62)
Refiner's Fire

[Live Worship Beginning]

GATHERING SONG: *For God Alone (Psalm 62)* -Sanctify

WELCOME -Pastor David

Holy Communion.
Super Bowl.

MEMORY VERSE -Pastor David

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied." - Matthew 5:6

WORSHIP MUSIC SET -Sanctify

I Love to Hear You Speak
Depth of Mercy
Refiner's Fire
Worship prayer -Pastor Andrew

[Both Recorded & Live Worship]

GENERATIONAL BRIDGE: -Pastor Andrew

SCRIPTURE READING: James 4:4-10 (CEB) -Reader:

James the Apostle calls people to a more pure focus on God alone. We cannot serve both God and the world. James 4:4-10,

“4 You unfaithful people! Don’t you know that friendship with the world means hostility toward God? So whoever wants to be the world's friend becomes God's enemy. 5 Or do you suppose that scripture is meaningless? Doesn’t God long for our faithfulness in the life He has given to us? 6 But He gives us more grace. This is why it says, God stands against the proud, but favors the humble. 7 Therefore, submit to God. Resist the devil, and he will run away from you. 8 Come near to God, and He will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners. Purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Cry out in sorrow, mourn, and weep! Let your laughter become mourning and your joy become sadness. 10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will lift you up.”

MESSAGE: Momentum (The Beatitudes) #5-6: Merciful & Pure Heart

PP#1: Momentum (The Beatitudes): Merciful and Pure Heart

“Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.” -Matthew 5:7-8

Momentum (The Beatitudes). Mercy & Pure. Matthew 5:7-8, “Blessed are those who are merciful, for they will receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.”

Last year Pastor Andrew used in worship here clips of an animated movie based on John Bunyan’s Christian classic book, *Pilgrim’s Progress*. We followed our hero, named Christian, as he made his journey from the “City of Destruction” to the “Celestial City.” Along the way he encountered all kinds of trials, temptations, and both encouraging and deceptive characters. One of the characters is from the town Fair-speech, and he tells Christian of a man named Mr. Facing-both-ways. Christian, in the end, is unable to persuade the man from Fair-speech to change his way and join him. You see, the man wanted to keep his options open, and to take what he wanted from each option.

PP#2: *Image of Mr. Facing-both-ways from*

<http://www.jeffriddle.net/2020/07/the-vision-double-minded-man.html>
with the subtitle, “A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.” -James 1:8

Mr. Facing-both-ways. What a descriptive name!

On one hand, this is a desirable attribute. We need to learn to get along, to see things from another’s point of view, to give in once in a while, to bend. Our government is trying to learn to do this again with the administrative change. How do you stick to your agenda while also learning to work together? We also need to do this as citizens: to not be so stubborn in our view that we refuse to see things differently, or are blind to other ways.

But this is also a dangerous way to live when it means that you don't stay focused on your priority. If you are always trying to "work" both sides, you compromise your values in a way that violates your honor and integrity. You are in danger of never standing strong, not staying fast and committed, resolute and faithful. We call it being double minded! Also in the town of Fair-speech is Lord Turn-about, Mr. Anything, and the pastor there is named Mr. Two-tongues. Ouch!

A few years ago we visited the Duluth Zoo, and we saw there a snake with two heads! And although it was able to *live* just fine, it could not *survive* on its own. The reason? The two heads always pull it in different directions, and it can't do anything, even feed itself. Mr. Facing-both-ways.

PP#3: *Image of a person swinging through the gymnastic rings.*

Jesus, in teaching the Beatitudes, is calling His followers to face only one way. It is the way of blessing, the way of abundant life, the way focused singularly on God's way. We are like gymnasts who step up to the platform with the committed desire for God's best life for us, and so we set our faces—take a singular focus—to progress through the rings of blessing.

The first three rings are all about developing our humility. These roots make the Holy Spirit able to grow from us the shoot of righteousness—living rightly—and desiring it so singularly that we hunger and thirst for it. This is living as a disciple who makes disciples.

Now, as we pursue living righteously, the Holy Spirit grows from this spiritual maturity the mature fruits of showing mercy, of purity of heart, of making peace, and of enduring persecution. Yes, we have now come to the *advanced* rings...the rings that we are only able to grab with the momentum from humility and a hunger for righteousness. This is the life of a mature Christian, singularly pursuing holiness and right living, day after day, time after time.

Now, remember, as it gets harder and harder, we may find ourselves struggling and stalling living as God wants. We may face ugly inner demons that knock us off our momentum. So remember, the Beatitudes not only describe the mature Christian life, they also provide the way to live it. Whenever you find yourself stalling, go back to the first ring. Admit you can't do it on your own. Turn against your sin of selfishness. Choose Jesus' way. Resolve to live rightly. This will give you the momentum to have victory over the demons that threaten to stall you.

Today we're looking at the next two beatitudes. Looking back now, I see I should have spent a full message on each one. Trying to have shorter series here maybe wasn't the best. Those of you here in person can't just fast-forward through this! So, you'll have to hang in there (pun intended)!

PP#4: *Recognizable image of the Good Samaritan showing mercy, subtitled, "Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy." -Matthew 5:7*

"Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy." Jesus later uses a story to really show what this means. We call it the Parable of the Good Samaritan. I preached on this a couple of months ago. A most unlikely person to offer help comes to the aid of the man who was beaten and robbed. Jesus asks the legal expert, "Who acted like a neighbor?" and the lawyer admitted, "The one who showed mercy." (Luke 10:37) Jesus then said, "Go and do likewise." How was the Samaritan merciful? What did that look like? It says in Luke 10:33, that when the Samaritan 1. "...saw the man..." beaten and lying on the side of the road, he 2. "...had compassion on him..." and 3. "...he went to him, bound up his wounds..."

PP#5: Mercy: 1. Seeing the need
 3. Having compassion
 2. Doing what you can

Here is the three-fold definition of mercy, according to Jesus. It's seeing those in need—noticing them, not being so fixated on yourself that you're blind to others around you. It's having a tenderness of heart, being moved to compassion, not casting blame or making excuses. And it's doing what you can about it; changing your current plan to make room for you to bless them. Mercy. Blessed are people who are merciful like this.

PP#6: Mercy is God's character.

"The Lord is merciful, gracious, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love."
 -Exodus 34:6, Nehemiah 9:7, Psalm 86:15, 103:8, 145:8, Joel 2:13, Jonah 4:2

This "advanced" beatitude calls us to live not only as God desires us to, but to live the way God Himself does. We are to be merciful, because God is merciful, and He wants us to live like He is. Over and over again in the Bible, God is revealed as merciful. When the Israelites first meet God at Mt. Sinai, Moses introduces God in Exodus 34:6 as "The Lord is merciful, gracious, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love." This is the God who has just proved this by freeing them from Egypt. This is who their God is. And, this *exact phrase* is used to describe God SEVEN times in the Old Testament. This is what you need to know about God! And therefore, be merciful, just as God has already shown you such radical and undeserved mercy.

It keeps going in the New Testament. Ephesians 2:4, "...God, who is rich in mercy..." Titus 3:5, we are "saved according to God's own mercy..." Hebrews 2:17, Jesus is our "merciful and faithful high priest..."

So, 1. God is merciful. He sees those in need. 2. He has compassion on us. He shows us incredible mercy! We have experienced God's mercy first-hand. This changes us, from the inside out! And so, 3. God calls us to extend this same mercy through how we treat others, extending it to them.

PP#7: Matthew 9:13, "Go and learn what this means: I want **mercy** and not sacrifice.[b] I didn't come to call righteous people, but sinners."

Micah 6:8, "What does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love **mercy** and to walk humbly with your God."

Psalm 23:6, "Surely goodness and **mercy** shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in God's house all my life!"

Jesus, when sparring with the Pharisees in Matthew 9:13, challenged them, "Go and learn what this means, [when God says in Hosea 6:6], 'I want mercy and not sacrifice'!" God wants His people to serve Him, to honor Him, by showing mercy to others. Micah 6:8, "What does the Lord require of you? To act justly [4th Beatitude] and to love mercy [5th Beatitude] and to walk humbly with your God" [Beatitudes #1,2,3].

Tell me, mature Christians, does this describe you? Are you merciful? Jesus charges us, "Go and learn what this means!" Assignment one, this week, seek out one concrete opportunity to show mercy to someone else each day. We need to condition our mercy, to tone our righteous life. We will

grow in mercy when we practice it, over and over again. Each morning, remember how God has shown you such radical mercy. Then look for one opportunity each day to pass that on to someone else. It may be as simple as keeping your mouth shut in a disagreement. It may be giving up some of your spending money. It may mean changing your schedule. Got it?

Remember, this is the path of blessing, Jesus says. Those who show mercy, will be shown mercy! Psalm 23 concludes with this promise: “Surely goodness *and* mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in God’s house all my life!”

PP#8: *Image of a person with binoculars, subtitled, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”* -Matthew 5:8

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” (Matthew 5:8) So, we are on the advanced rings, aren’t we? I mean, we resonate with being poor in spirit, morning sin, and meek. But who would even try to claim to be pure in heart? And seeing God? The Bible itself tells us we can’t! God tells Moses that no person can look on God and live (Exodus 33:20). 1 Corinthians 13 says that now we only look like in a mirror dimly, we won’t look at God face-to-face until glory.

So, I need to explain that purity of heart here in the Bible is not how we may normally think of it. To have pure water means only water and nothing else in it: just H₂O. We think of purity scientifically, in makeup. So, we today would define a pure mind as never, ever, having a bad thought. A pure heart means never, ever having a wrong desire or feeling. Impossible, for sure.

The Bible, however, talks about purity in *relational* terms. So, rather than defining it in terms of absolutely no impurities (a modern scientific use of the word), a better way to get the Bible’s meaning is to understand it as what your heart is set on. A pure heart, in this sense, is a heart that is set on God. It is directed, committed, focused. This is the same way that the Bible talks about holiness and perfection. It’s not talking scientifically, being perfect means never having any imperfections or even the slightest of errors. It means having a stubborn, steadfast pursuit of holiness, of choosing right over and over again, of having a love that abides in your heart, that continues to grow, and that becomes your regular normal. Yes, one day in glory we will have a pure mind, a holy heart, a perfect life in a scientific sense, too. But while in this life we live in a fallen reality, and purity here means our greatest longing.

Think of it this way: a pure heart is an undivided heart. Just like in a healthy marriage, a person binds herself to only one other, so a pure heart is committed to—is bound to—God alone. An undivided heart has a singular focus. It means setting your face toward God. Jesus says in this same sermon, a chapter later (in 6:22), that “The eye is the lamp of the body, and if the eye is healthy,”—in the original language it says “if the eye ‘be single,’—the whole body will be full of light. If the eye is set *singularly* on God, focused, then only God’s light will shine in through the eyes, and the whole person will be filled with God’s light.

Pure in heart means being focused, going after one thing. Søren Kierkegaard, one of my favorite theologians and pastors—but still second to John Wesley!—explained that “Purity of heart is to will one thing.”

The opposite is Mr. Facing-both-ways! He has a divided heart. This was Elijah’s problem with the people on the top of Mt. Carmel. They had a divided allegiance. The people were trying to follow God AND other idols. Elijah called them to a singularity of allegiance, to a purity of commitment.

PP#9: James 4:4, 7-10

4 ...Whoever wants to be the world's friend becomes God's enemy. ... 7 Therefore, submit to God. ... 8 Come near to God, and He will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners. Purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Cry out in sorrow, mourn, and weep! ... 10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will lift you up.

James 4 says we can't serve both God and the world. Verse 7, "Submit to God," that's the first three Beatitudes. "Come near to God," and you will see Him [we can see God!], for "He will come near to you!" "Purify your hearts, you double-minded. [There it is!] Cry out in sorrow, mourn [2nd Beatitude] ... humble yourself [first three beatitudes].

PP#10: Philippians 3:12-14

12 It's not that I have already reached this goal or have already been perfected, but I pursue it, so that I may grab hold of it because Christ grabbed hold of me for just this purpose. 13 Brothers and sisters, I myself don't think I've reached it, but I do this one thing: I forget about the things behind me and reach out for the things ahead of me. 14 The goal I pursue is the prize of God's upward call in Christ Jesus. 15 So all of us who are spiritually mature should think this way....

In Philippians 3:12-14 Paul says, "Not that I have already attained perfection" (in the heavenly sense), but in the earthly sense, Paul says, "I pursue it...this one thing I do: I forget what is behind me and reach out for the things ahead of me. The goal I pursue is the prize of God's upward call in Christ Jesus." This is purity of heart: pursuing it, grabbing at it, laying aside other priorities, reaching for godliness. And, he says, "all of us who are spiritually mature should think this way." This is what spiritual maturity, holiness, purity, looks like.

So, fellow Christian disciples, are we done with being Mr. Facing-both-ways?

One of the key cripples of the Christian walk is the belief that we cannot be pure. This keeps us from making strides in holiness and godliness, and keeps us from the blessed life.

We believe that we are saved, yes. We believe that God forgives our sin. We are clean. But we don't believe that we can be holy. We have just too much baggage. We have done some terrible things. We cannot un-see or undo or unlearn our past. We are now messed up.

But hear the words of Christmas, when the angel says to Joseph, "You will call Him Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). It's not just that Jesus forgives sin, He saves us *from our sins*! Frees us from our sins! He makes us new. The Bible calls that being re-generated with a new birth, a new start, a new life, a new heart, a new focus. Titus 3:4-5 says it's the "washing of regeneration." We can be pure!

Some Christians stall on the rings. They manage to hang on, but they do not grow spiritually. They just become older versions of what they were before. And often, it's because of a divided focus. They are not pursuing God with all their hearts, they don't forget what is past, they don't strive forward with a singularity of face.

Are you done with being Mr. Facing-both-ways?

PP#11: Psalm 86, a Psalm of David

11 Teach me your way, Lord, so that I can walk in your truth.

Make my heart focused only on honoring your name.

12 I give thanks to you, my Lord, my God, with all my heart,
and I will glorify your name forever,

13 because your faithful love toward me is awesome
and because you've rescued my life from the lowest part of hell.

Psalm 86 is a prayer of a mature believer. In verse 11, King David says, "Teach me your way, Lord, so that I can walk in your truth. Make my heart focused only on honoring your name."

Assignment #1: Each day seek a specific way to show mercy. Assignment #2: Each day, pray Psalm 86:11, "Make my heart focused only on honoring your name" O Lord!

"Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God."

Amen.

PRAYERS & HOLY COMMUNION: -Pastor Dan Hair

CLOSING SONG: *Blessed to Be a Blessing*

OFFERING: -Pastor David

-Give of your monies to God's work through this church. You can give in person, mail it in or, most conveniently, you can make an automated transfer or a debit card payment on the church website or by using the "square" on the bulletin.

ANNOUNCEMENTS -Pastor David

Assignment #1: Each day seek a specific way to show mercy.

Assignment #2: Each day, pray Psalm 86:11, "Make my heart focused only on honoring your name" O Lord!

Next Sunday: Momentum, last 2 Beatitudes: Peacemaking & Persecution -Pastor David

MEMORY VERSE -Pastor David

"Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God." -Matthew 5:7-8

BENEDICTION -Pastor David