

Good morning. My name is Matt. Again, some of you may not know me. I started working here a couple months ago. So I've met some of you.

So I've been preaching and teaching in churches for over 30 years now. And there's two things that have been most helpful for me in preaching. Number one is, for three years, I taught junior high mathematic. And if you. When I was in college, I hated speech class.

I hated speaking in public. After teaching three years in front of junior high kids every day for 180 days, I'll do anything right. No more fear. There's no fear. They would tell me, oh, your socks don't match.

I don't like your beard. I don't like your haircut. So there's no more fear of exposure. Plus, when you talk, my taught junior high kids, I had to make things that seem complicated really simple, because they are. They can be with math.

They also can't be with the Bible. So that was the first thing that was really helpful for my preaching. Second thing was my wife. And I'm not just saying that because I'm married to her. Early on in my being a pastor, I remember I was talking through a sermon with my wife, and we were sitting in the kind of lower part of our house, and I just said, well, then we.

We just have to give glory to God. She's like, what does that look like? I was like, what do you mean? That's what we're supposed to do. She goes, I know, but what does it look like?

I'm like, I don't know. It's a nice theological phrase, right? And my wife has no tolerance for pat answers or theological mumbo jumbo. So she kept asking me, what does that look like? What do you mean?

How do I give glory to God 24/7 on Tuesday afternoon? Whatever. It really irritated me when she was saying that, but I thought it's really what I needed the most. Cause what we all want to know is when we read scriptures, what does that look like for my life? So I had one of these moments a couple days ago.

I had. I've been working on this sermon for a few weeks now, hours, really. And I had a bunch. I had a plan for the sermon, all right? I have 30 pages of notes copied off commentary pages and things like that.

I had a plan. I was telling my wife, and she was like, no, I don't think that's it. She said, what does it look like? And we're looking at the past. So I was like, okay, so I'll just I'm just like, do it.

All right. I mean, I'm not throwing it in the waste basket. I still have that stuff in my head. But she asked me the question, so what

does it look like? The pastor today is blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

And she's like, what does it look like? What does it look like for me to be pure in heart? What does it look like to see God? All right, so there's the passage. Read this with me.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Now I want you to say, Matt, what does it look like? Thank you for asking that question. First thing we're going to ask is, what does it look like to be pure in heart? What does that look like?

Does that just mean be a moral person, do good, don't be mean. There's probably more than that. There's more to that than what Jesus taught me. What does it look like for you or me? I mean, I'm 62.

Most of you are older than me. My mom's 88. So I think about my mom. What does it mean for me to be pure in heart? You to be pure in heartland?

Again, most of you probably aren't cheating on your taxes or cheating on your spouses. If you are, that's got to deal with that. But what does it look like to be pure in heart? So let's look at the context here. So when Jesus was talking about this, so he's part of the sermon on the mount.

We've done this series called the Blessed Life, and he's telling them, this is the way to the blessed life, the life of, wow, that's the kind. That's the life you've always wanted. That's the blessed life. Well, see, when he was saying that blessed are the pure in heart, keep in mind, always when Jesus was talking, there were most likely pharisees listening in. All right, I think we have a picture.

Yeah. They were listening in. They were either on the corner, back on the side. They were listening in because they were trying to figure out, who is this Jesus guy that's so popular and what's he saying? And they did not like it.

They did not like it when he said, blessed are the pure in heartland. Why? Because they believed that purity was a matter of behaviors and managing your image well and looking good. So when Jesus said pure in heart is what God's looking for, they were like, whoa. Cause they were all about purity of actions.

One thing, for example, they were really, really big on the ceremonial washing of hands. Before you ate. It wasn't like mom telling you, wash your hands before you eat. It was. You had to do that.

It was a spiritually necessary thing. And it comes from good intentions. From the levitical laws and things like that. But they

blew it up way out of proportion. To the point where it was like, you have to wash your hands this way.

So the water doesn't drip down back on your fingers. Then you wash it this way. And you had to have at least one and a half eggshells of water. To cause a washed hands. They were all into this ceremony.

And you might remember from the gospel stories. They were upset at times when the disciples weren't washing their hands. And it wasn't like mom. It was the religious authority saying, you're not pure. You're not washing your hands.

And they even asked Jesus, why don't your disciples wash their hands in a ceremonial way. To show their purity? And Jesus is like, well, what goes into you doesn't make you impure. It's what comes out of your hearts. Envy and anger and lust and those things he said, what goes into you.

The purity is not external inside. It's what's inside of you. The disciples actually said to Jesus. Do you know you just offended the Pharisees by what you just said? And Jesus says.

He actually says this. Ignore them. Because they were so focused on, like, we can be my external image. And how that looks at 1.1 of the Pharisees. It says in the Gospel of Luke.

They were amazed that Jesus skipped the hand washing ritual. He went straight to the table and sat down. And they're probably like, why isn't he? Cause it was a ritual that showed you were pure. And Jesus pointed out to them, no, I'm not concerned about that.

The externals. I'm concerned about the internals. I'm concerned about your heart. And the Pharisees were expert. And we use this term and I'll explain it.

They were experts in contempt. All right. I have this street sign. It's in my. I had it made years ago.

Contempt, not content. Somebody said one time, why can't we be content? No contempt. All right. Contempt is the emotion I feel.

You feel when you think something or someone is beneath you. And the Pharisees were experts at contempt. I can be too. Cause contempt is what. Even when Jesus talks later in the sermon on the mount.

Contempt's the root. Adultery, you have contempt for your spouse. Contempts the root of murder and anger. You have contempt for that person. So you call them, you fool.

Contempt is root of not forgiving somebody. Contempt is the root of

when Jesus says, let your yes be yes and your no be no essentially is what he's saying. Stop manipulating people with fake answers because they you hold. When you're trying to manipulate somebody, you hold them in contempt. So contempt is the issue that most likely is the source of any of the stuff in our hearts that are impure, because behind contempt is our pride.

We're better than somebody else. We don't need. So my challenge today for pure in heart is be ruthless. And I'm saying this to myself about the elimination of contempt from your heart. And you might say, I don't have contempt.

Maybe not. Maybe you're Jesus. Right. Contempt. Also.

I'll say it's what you. Have you ever rolled your eyes, but not figuratively, but internally, because the person is looking at you. Please tell me those of you who are married, you haven't done that to your spouse. Because I have. My wife will say something, and I won't roll my eyes because I'm smart, right?

But internally, I'm rolling my eyes. That's contempt. All right? Or somebody I see on the street or somebody cuts me off, or somebody. And I'm just like, idiot.

I don't say that in the car a few times. Maybe I have. I don't know. But that's contempt. Or if I'm trying to squeeze my language so somebody believes me, even though I'm trying to stretch the truth, that's contempt.

The root of pornography and lust is contempt. Cause you have, you hold in contempt this other body that you don't even know you're using them. You hold them in contempt.

So not having eliminating contempt, and one of the things that I've found in my life, and this has been part of my pure in heart journey, is when I feel contempt. I'm learning to stop and ask, Jesus, I don't want to be that way. Clean my heart, make me pure in heart. I don't want to have that roll my eyes figuratively, to my wife. I don't want to be calling somebody a jerk or whatever.

I don't want to be treating people that way. I don't want to be treating the human body that way. I don't want to be treating people when I'm trying. I don't like that. But I can't wash my own heart, right?

But those points I stop and ask, Jesus, I don't want this in my heart anymore. I want a pure heart. It's kind of like was read earlier, create me a clean heart. Oh, God, you can't do that. You can ask God that.

You can't do the washing. That's his job. It's not a matter of trying harder. It's a matter of recognizing when those moments happen. I don't want to be a pharisee.

I don't want to look at people and think they're less than me, spiritual, because they don't do this or they do that or do this. So when Jesus says, blessed are the pure in heart, that's what I think it looks like. It looks like me being willing to see those times in my heart. Because Jesus told the Pharisees, you're full of wickedness and envy and corruption and lust and all those things. If he's telling them that, he's telling us that.

And maybe that's an issue where you've got to let Jesus identify something in your heart. Where contempt is behind it all. Because we want pure hearts. So that's the first part of the question. What does that look like?

Second part is, blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Say that with me, for they will see God. Now ask me, so, Matt, what does that look like? Thank you for asking that question. My answer is, I'm not quite sure.

But here's some thoughts. Sometimes we tend to look at that passage and say, oh, that means when I die, I'm going to see God in heaven. That's true. Doesn't always make me deal with life today and the way I want to deal with life today. So what does it mean?

What were these people thinking when Jesus said, you're going to see God? Because they had been led to believe their whole life? Understandably, from the Old Testament, no one can see God and live. I mean, the priest only could go back to the holy of holies once a year and all kinds of special rules, or he would die to see the glory of God. So what does it mean for you and I to see God in my daily life?

In your daily life, how do you see God? Well, it points to our need to experientially encounter God. Some people get a little bit weirded by that word. But our faith in Jesus is not just a mental, cognitive thing we are meant to experience. Seeing someone is an experience.

When I see my wife, I experience my wife. I can think about my wife. But when I see her, when I see my kids, when I see my neighbors, it's an experience of them. And sometimes in our lives, myself included, I'm too content with just the cognitive world about God. And I don't stop and think, I want to see you, I want to hear you.

I want to feel your love. So this is an experiential term. One Rowan writer wrote this. In our age of spiritual disenchantment, it's the experiential aspect of faith that's increasingly our biggest struggle. Without direct encounters and experience of God, our faith dries up.

Now you might say, well, no, I believe I have it all. I held in my head, I have all the doctrine. That's good. So did the Pharisees, but they did not experience God. They didn't see him.

So you might still say, well, what you know, you look at the Bible, and Moses experienced God in a dramatic way, and God went by him, and Moses fell on his face. Jacob experienced God. Isaiah experienced God. He said, woe is me. And he fell on his face when he saw the Lord in a vision.

And Mary experienced God. Paul on the road to Damascus experienced God. John in the book of Revelation said he saw Jesus and he fell on his face. Then you might say, well, is that what we're looking for, this dramatic experience somebody's going to write about? Maybe.

But maybe let's just tone it down, though, because maybe there's ways, or I can experience God, or at least can want to experience God in those ways. Because if I don't see Jesus or hear him or feel his love for me, it's like the quote I just read, my faith can get kind of dry because it's got to be more than just belief. Some of you may have heard of a man named Oswald Chambers. He was a British Scottish missionary, spiritual writer, wrote a book called My Atmosphere Highest. This would have been back 100 years ago, and he was in the middle of his ministry.

And this is what he said one time about Christianity, because he was struggling with, I'm not seeing God, I'm not experiencing him. He said, I knew if what I had was all the Christianity there was, then this thing is a fraud. Cause he was feeling like not experiencing God. He wasn't feeling, seeing or hearing him. And then he said, either Christianity is a fraud, or I got ahold of the wrong end of the stick.

And this is in the middle of prominent, busy ministry season for him. He was a missionary, he was a pastor, his teacher. This is somebody like that saying, this isn't enough for me just to have all the right things in my head and answer the multiple choice test in heaven correctly. I want to experience. I want to see him and he even said, during that time of his life, the Bible was the dullest, most uninteresting book in existence.

And the sense of the bad motives of my own heart were terrific. And I thought, well, if he can say that he was a missionary, author, speaker, pastor, then maybe that's something we can just say, you know, I kind of want to experience you. And it's not a demand. It's just like with my wife. If I could just tell you about my wife and I never see her, you would question whether I actually know her.

But I want to experience her. And Jesus can be experienced. We can see him now. Maybe not a vision, but I think you know what I mean. Seeing is the experiential word.

So we can experience him, see him, hear him, feel him. So when Jesus says, blessed are the pure in heart, blessed are those who have allowed things from their heart to be pure before God. And you will see God. You know, I know some of you. Like I said, I'm not.

Like I said, I'm 62. I'm not making fun of the rest of you, but most of you are older than me. Sorry, Kaden. Or, you know, not you. And my mom's 88, and my mom is asked where some of you might ask, too.

I'm just not sure why I'm here anymore. I just want to go home to God. But I would say to my mom, and I'll say to you, you're here because God wants you to experience him. He wants you to see him. He wants you to hear him.

He wants you to talk to him. He wants you to feel his love. You are here because God's relationship with you on this earth isn't done yet. He wants you to experience him in ways maybe you haven't your whole life.

So we've asked the question, what does it look like to say, my heart is pure? And I've talked about removing contempt from your heart. And I've talked about, what does it mean to see God? And it's experiential. I want more.

There's something more. There's always something more in your relationship with Jesus? Always. So then the question becomes, now what? Not what.

How do I. What's my next step with that? So, on this one, I'm going to talk about psalm 139, which we didn't coordinate this, but this was talked about early in the service. So I'm always amazed when God coordinates things apart from our planning. Right?

Psalm 139. Search me, o God. Know my heart. Try me. And know my anxious thoughts.

See if there's any offensive way in me and lead me to the way everlasting search me, o God, and know my what heart blessed are the pure in heart so let me tell you a story about this. Another story about my wife. So she's not here, but it's true, so I'm not. You can. Don't need to fact check me, okay.

We were engaged, and we were planning our wedding. Oh, I need to add this. I had just memorized the whole psalm 139 about the year before this event. So be careful what you memorize because God will bring it up and bring it against you. Right?

So I'd memorize this, and we're sitting in her parents living room talking about our wedding planning, and she wanted this guy named mark

to be the dj. All right? I knew mark. Mark was okay. I didn't always like mark, but I was more bothered by the fact that my wife was making all the decisions.

And I wanted some say that's not true, but that's what I was feeling, right? So we're arguing about mark being the dj, and you're like, that's a stupid argument. Yes, it is. But I'm sure, sure you've all had stupid arguments, and we're arguing, and I was just. I was kind of pushing back, and I'm laughing as I remember this.

She just got up, turned the lights off in the living room, went up to the bedroom. She was sleeping and said, you're a jerk, and I'm sitting in a chair. I think we have a spotlight coming up for me, right? It's a God spotlight thing. All right, I'm sitting in a chair.

Where's my. Here's my spotlight. I'm sitting, and it's not for me. I'm sitting in a chair, and I'm literally sitting like this. And I'm feeling bad for my wife.

Cause she got angry, like, oh, God bless her heart, she needs you. And I'm sitting here, and I hear very clearly from God, search me, o God, and know my heart. And it really was like this spotlight came onto me, and I internally said to God, you need to go up to kathy right now. She needs this. She needs to get better.

And God's like, no, I'm talking to you. And I literally did this. I opened my hands up sitting on the chair, and I was like, okay, search me. Oh, God, I know my heart. And God said to me, I kid you not, he said, you're the jerk.

But like Maggie said, he said it in a very kind way. He was kind and gentle, but he was like, no, this is you. You're the one that stirred this thing. It was in your heart that stirred this thing. And that experience of my life, that experience of God talking to me in that way, has been a foundation of my understanding of God search.

I don't want to treat this person this way. I don't want to do that. Why? God search my heart. Show me what I need to be dealing with.

Show me the contempt issues in my heart, whether it's small issue toward my wife or a big issue towards somebody I work with or mom or dad or whatever else. God, show me that. I don't want to be that way. I don't want any pharisee to live in my heart. So it says, search me.

Oh, God. And this spotlight here is actually quite unnerving. Not for me here physically, but spiritually, because I think I'm good. I think I'm good. You know, I don't.

Don't get it too close, right? We had to repaint our basement one time, and we had a bunch of friends help out and stuff, so I self

assigned myself the job of the inspector. So I got a lamp, took the shade off, and went around all the walls, seeing if it was all painted correctly with a bright light. Right? And there was one part I thought this was not done well.

My wife's like, that was your section. Oh. Oh, okay. Well, it's okay. It's okay.

We don't need the bright light on there, right? But that's how we are with God. I don't need the bright light, God. I think I'm good. But can you move from this posture of your heart to this one and say, okay, search me, oh, God, and know my heart?

Because God is gentle, he is kind, and he wants to set you free. He's not a policeman running you down on the interstate. He is gentle. And some of you may already know what issues you need to deal with, whether it's anger, whether it's lust. Those things.

Jesus listed them all. Envy, anger, lust, all those things. Maybe you already know that, but you just need Jesus to show you the way out. But also, maybe you're just like. I don't know.

I feel like there's something God wants to tell me. You open your hands up and get in the light, and God will show you. He will show you in the most gentle way. And I used to have this analogy of having to go down into the manhole cover of my heart. Incidentally, it's funny that the manhole cover hasn't hit the gender wars.

We don't call them person hole covers. They'll call them manhole covers. Right. But it's just a side thing, so. But I don't want to go down into the manhole cover of my heart.

I don't know what's down there in the sewer, I'm afraid. And there was a time where Jesus said, I'm going with you. I'll go down there with you. You don't go down alone. I'll go down there with you.

Cause I want your heart to be pure. I want you to be fully alive and awake and free. I'll go down there with you.

And so my challenge to all of you, myself included, is invite the spotlight. Invite the psalm 139. Spotlight. Search me, oh, God, know my heart. Try me.

And know my anxious thoughts. You may think there's nothing going on in my heart. Then ask. He may say, you know that relationship you have with that person. You need to think differently about how you treat them.

You might need to do that. But are you willing to listen to God on that? And so, Jesus in John chapter 14, because, again, some of you

might say, well, I'm good. I don't need this. I'm good with Jesus.

But Jesus in John 14 says, he who loves me obeys me, and he who loves me and obeys me will be loved by my father, and I will show myself to him. See, the love of Jesus is unconditional for all of us. His revealing himself to us so we can see him is reserved for those who are willing to say, search me, o God, I want to obey you in everything in my life.

So, yes, Jesus loves you unconditionally. Yes, he does. But if you want to see him, Jesus said it himself, those who love me obey me. Those who love and obey me, I will reveal myself to him, and so will the father. So when we look at blessed are the pure in heart, they will see God.

And then put the psalm passage up there one more time, and I'm going to ask you to do something here as I close the psalm 139. Do we have that on the slide? And if not, I can just. I'll just say it. I want everybody to actually.

Let's do this. Just close your eyes. We won't worry about the slide. All right, close your eyes. And I want you to open at least one hand on your lap.

Open maybe both hands, so your posture isn't tight. Your arms aren't crossed. You're not having that posture of, don't mess with me, God. Open your hands and I just want you to repeat after me. Search me, oh God, and know my heart.

Try me and know my anxious thoughts.

See if there's any offensive way in me and lead me in the way of everlasting.

Keep your eyes closed. The everlasting way is an everlasting kind of life. It's not just life after you die. It's the life of fullness, of peace and joyous. So, Jesus, we pray for all of us.

I pray for myself. I pray for anybody here who's in their twenties, thirties, forties, fifties, sixties, seventies, eighties. I pray for all of us. We want to know you more. We want to experience you more.

We want to see you because we know when we see you, we experience the fullness of joy and peace, hope in your presence. We know that. So I pray that you'd give us the courage and the trust that you are gentle and kind to invite you to search us. Because we want pure hearts and we want to see you. And we love you.

And we ask this all in your name, Jesus. Amen.