

FIRST SCRIPTURE LESSON: Psalm 86:6-11  
SECOND SCRIPTURE LESSON: Titus 2:1-8 (New American Standard Translation)  
MEMORY VERSE: “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.”  
Matthew 5:8

## **Grace to you and peace from the One who is and who was and who is to come.**

Sometimes when I go home, I need a time to “vege out” so I watch some television. “Law and Order” is a favorite as are some of the cooking shows, especially the one with Chef Ramsey, since Ramsey is my maiden name. I also like some of the home-focused reality shows – I have watched many rooms get make-overs; I’ve gone along with those who are trying to find just the right house; and I’ve been as amazed as the owners seem to be when the clutter in their house gets organized, and a new home emerges from chaos.

I can especially relate to all of these home-focused reality shows. With some of the challenges of our new home here in Quakertown as a driving force, I really enjoy seeing how rooms can be made to look entirely different with a coat of paint and some well-placed accents. Also, I find it intriguing to try to guess which of the three homes will be picked as the best fit for the home searchers. But I find the series about getting rid of clutter and finding the gem that may be buried underneath the most satisfying of all. My personal goal is that someday, some way, Pastor Doug and I will finally have all of the boxes and clutter out of our house.

I don’t think I’m alone in this. I also believe we all have a bit of a tendency to make clutter, by not putting things away or finding it difficult to toss things even items we haven’t used or worn in years. But the clutter problem is not only our own doing; it seems that such problems grow exponentially, depending on the number of family members living in the home, especially if some of those family members are teens. Many of you with teens in the house may be experiencing what Pastor Doug and I did with our children.

Our boys shared a room which made it a bit problematic – Joe was always neat, but David was just the opposite. The worst problem with them was their way of cleaning up their room. They put all the clothes that were on the floor,

whether clean or dirty, into the hamper – for me to wash yet again. That’s when they started washing their own clothes.

Our daughter Wendy – room to herself – took clutter to new heights. When things started to really go downhill, I refused to even try to clean her room. So the task fell to her and she soon found the task so daunting that she gave up – for months, for years. Finally, after she graduated from high school, we issued an ultimatum – either she cleaned her room so that we could once again see the floor, or we would not pay her college tuition. Finally, after several days of work, just before her college classes were to begin, she dug through all of the debris and found the floor, along with a lot of supposedly lost or loaned clothing and even some dishes and utensils that had been missing for months.

All this talk about cleaning and clutter is related to our beatitude for this morning – Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. The most important part of the first half of the beatitude is the “pure in heart” part.

What does it mean to be pure in heart? You’ve probably noticed that words fascinate me. I’ve had a class or two about language development and have learned that the meanings of words can change over time. For example, something Pastor Doug and I learned recently is that the word “silly” originally meant “blessed.” Consequently, when we have an important phrase like pure in heart, I want to know what those words mean. Here’s what I found.

This New Testament word – pure – in the original Greek is *katharos*. Its meaning, like that of many words, changed over the years. Originally it simply meant clean. It was the word used for dirty clothes which have been laundered.

A second meaning, related, was used to describe grain that had been cleaned and sifted to remove all of the chaff. It was also used to describe an army unit that was made up entirely of first-class fighting men. No discontents or shirkers allowed.

A third use was used to describe milk or wine that didn’t have any water added. It was similarly used for something metallic that was made up of one metal only, no alloys in their makeup.

When Jesus used this word – pure – he used it in this context. Pure - unmixed or unadulterated, completely of one mind, without distraction. Another way of stating this beatitude is this: Blessed is the person whose motives are always entirely unmixed, for that person will see God.

What does that mean for us? I think it says that we are to strive for pure motives. We should do the things God asks of us because they are the right things to do. And we should do them without thoughts of how we might look to others if we act in this way. Or think about how we might use the experience to get something from someone else.

Some would say that there is no such thing as pure motives – that everything we do is tinged with self-interest. I agree that mixed motives are always a part of us – I don't think any of us can truly say that we can meet this very high standard, at least not very often, and remove all thoughts concerning our self interest away. However, there is benefit for striving to attain this goal.

The reward is found in the second phrase of this beatitude. It is the result of a pure heart. The pure in heart will see God. Those with pure motives will see God. This is especially appropriate this year for First Church since we have been gathering God Sightings, seeing God in our lives, ever since the idea originated in Vacation Bible School last year.

Pure hearts open our eyes to God's blessings all around us. How are we different when a pure heart allows us to see God? Here's a secular example: over the years Pastor Doug and I have visited several art galleries because we enjoy experiencing various styles of art. However, modern art has sometimes left us feeling like it's not art at all but rather the result of a paint fight or a jumble of metal glued together. Sometimes we have wondered just what the artist may have taken prior to creating his/her masterpiece. Often these works of art seem completely incomprehensible to us.

However, several years ago we had the opportunity to go into New York City with my aunt who had been married to an art professor for many years prior to his death. His focus was modern art of the 1960s and 70s. He taught my aunt much about modern art from this era. What a revelation it was for us to stand

before a painting that we once considered hardly better than the efforts that might come out of a nursery school art session – and with my aunt’s expertise we now saw nuances and uses of color, texture, and effects that totally transformed our experience of modern art. What a difference it made to us to see this art through the eyes of someone who knew and loved such creations. This experience is one I will never forget. We saw with new eyes.

Music is like that as well. I think our heart music – the music that we choose to listen to for enjoyment – is music that we understand and experience in ways that other forms of music cannot match.

Faith is like that, too. People sometimes feel that God has deserted them or that God could never forgive them for what they’ve done or that God couldn’t have time for them since they are so unimportant. Often these folks feel that God is far away. There is that old saying that if you feel that God is far away, who moved?

In situations like these, other things get in the way of pure faith, faith that continues in the face of opposition or apathy. In such cases our view of God is obscured by other stuff, clutter, baggage, confusion. This stuff makes it hard to see God. However, when these things are removed, through confession and forgiveness and in developing a deeper relationship with God, then our view is clearer, and it is easier to see God.

Gregg’s song that we recently heard has lyrics that reflect this pure faith:

The faith of a mother -

There’s a moment in my morn when I hold my child and pray –  
keep him safe here in my arms and every place that I can’t be today.

Then he’s off to see the world as he runs out my back door

Can You hold him for me, God through all the trials that he has in store?

Oh, may he learn to praise You, Lord, with every breath he takes!

And I thank You, Lord, for giving me this child!

A mother’s pure love for her child and her pure faith in God allows her to give thanks and praise to God for the gift of her child.

Later in life this woman says:

There’s a moment in my day when I stop to look around  
at the miracles You formed in every rock and tree and bird I’ve found.  
Then Your sun light paints the hills while it takes my breath away  
Am I worthy of Your grace and all the gifts You freely give each day?

Let all that is within me praise Your name eternally!  
And I thank You, Lord, for the beauty everywhere!

Again this woman’s pure heart has opened her eyes to the beauty of the earth  
surrounding her – not only does she see this beauty she offers thanks and  
praise to God for all that is beautiful around her.

Finally, in later life, this same woman says:

There’s a moment in my eve when my voice cannot be still  
blending poems with melodies until my heart has truly had its fill  
Then the rhythms of my life join with words from every friend  
And my spirit simply soars as this wondrous day draws near – an end.

Oh, let me sing each verse of life in blessed harmony!  
And I thank You Lord for music in my soul.

There are moments, there are moments, precious moments in my life  
when I can only thank You God!

In these words we can experience another’s pure heart for God through pure  
musical interpretation. We can see God with the same joy and thankfulness if  
we strive for pure hearts, hearts that desire more than anything else to live in  
perfect harmony with God and one another.

In removing the clutter, organizing our lives, tossing the trash, we open a new  
path to purity of heart. We are rewarded for this work by enjoying God in ways  
that were obscured before. This is indeed a reason to be thankful. Amen.