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Eunike Jonathan

The Beatitudes in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1-12) can be gathered into the two great commandments: to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength—and to love our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22:36-40). The first draws us *inward toward undivided love for God; the second moves us outward into embodied love for others.* That is the Way of Jesus.

Many who have faithfully matured in love through poverty of spirit, mourning, meekness, hunger for righteousness, and mercy (Matthew 5:3-7)—may find themselves in a season of exile, when inner transformation outgrows external constructs still shaped by fear. This article flows from the same concern expressed in an open letter I wrote, "To the Exiles Who Still Love Jesus,"[1] which reflects on healing from spiritual exile and rediscovering communion through love.

It is from within this experience of exile and rediscovery that the next Beatitude takes on new meaning:

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8).

This Beatitude reveals how seeing God becomes the turning point—when inner vision is healed and love begins to flow outward as peace. Without this renewal of sight, pain can harden into isolation or reconstruct the systems we left behind. The Jesus Way calls us instead toward communion—to live in relationship even with our enemies, not by mirroring fear but by keeping the door of love open.

> **The purity of heart Jesus describes in Matthew 5:8 is not about moral perfection but about seeing through love—an undivided vision that makes us peacemakers and children of God.**

This article, employing an exegetical and contemplative approach that weaves Scripture, patristic insight and lived experience, explores purity of heart not as moral perfection but as an undivided vision—the capacity to see God clearly within ourselves, others, and even our own wounds.

Seeing God's Eyes

Those who have already tasted mercy and begin to recognize within themselves the reflection of God's likeness. From that recognition comes the invitation to move from receiving mercy to perceiving divinity—from knowing God's compassion to seeing with God's eyes.

Before considering the phrase purity of heart, we recall what Jesus meant by blessed. The Greek word *makarios* speaks of sharing in God's own life—a joy unshaken by circumstance, "the ultimate happiness without the faultlines of happenstance."[2]

To be blessed, then, is to share in God's own life. ***Each Beatitude is not a command to achieve but an invitation to divine life.*** The blessed are those whose hearts become transparent to divine joy, reflecting the radiance of God, who is Love (see 1 John 4:8).

"Blessed are the Pure in Heart"– Being Whole

The Greek word for pure (*katharos*) refers to what is free from taint, stain, or impurity—"unpolluted by lies, half-truths, or slogans."[3]

Importantly, *katharos* does not imply separation from

imperfection but integration within the self—wholeness, the absence of duplicity, hypocrisy, or self-deception. Augustine calls it "a singleness of heart."[4]

Over time, the word pure has often been narrowed or misused—not only to suggest moral or sexual perfection but to define religious worthiness. Some have taken it to mean total, uncompromising devotion to God—an ideal of perfect worship and flawless virtue attainable only by a few. Though sincere in their pursuit of holiness, such views risk reducing purity to outward performance rather than the inner transformation Jesus describes.

When he spoke these words, Jesus was not addressing the few but the many—the ordinary, weary and seeking multitudes (see Matthew 5:1). His invitation to purity was never about religious elitism but about restored wholeness of heart. The truly blessed life—the one rooted in God's own being—is the life whose inner world has been cleansed of illusion, whose motives and actions flow from the same clear spring of Love Himself (see Hebrews 10:22). Purity is not moral perfection but transparency of being—the state through which divine light passes unhindered and illumines all.

This understanding of pure naturally extends to the heart, for the purity Jesus describes is not flawless devotion but the integration of one's entire self. In Scripture, the heart (*kardia*) is the center of physical, intellectual, and spiritual life—the seat of vitality and the source of thought, desire, emotion and intention. It encompasses understanding, will and character: the whole person in motion.

When the meaning of heart is reduced to emotion or sentimentality, Jesus' command to love or believe "with all your heart" becomes a matter of passion and intensity rather than participation and integration into divine life. Yet Jesus points to something far deeper: the heart as the meeting place between the human and the divine, the space where we learn to perceive as God perceives (see Psalm 51:10).

To be pure in heart is to live from that center—where intellect, will, and desire are united in love. This purity naturally follows mercy, for a heart that is rigid or unkind—even toward itself—can never be truly pure. Therefore, purity does not arise from strict religious performance but from a heart softened by love from God, for oneself, and for others.

"For They Shall See God" The Restoration of Sight

To see God is both a promise and a present possibility. Within the Beatitudes, it signifies not an external vision of divinity but an interior awakening of communion.

In the language of the early Church, the mind (*nous*) is the spiritual eye of the soul. It directs the will and illumines the inner person. When the mind is clear, it governs the heart rightly, allowing divine light to permeate the whole being. Jesus expresses this truth through metaphor:

> **The purity of heart Jesus describes in Matthew 5:8 is not about moral perfection but about seeing through love—an undivided vision that makes us peacemakers and children of God.**

The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eye is sound, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness (see Matthew 6:22-23).

This image reveals a two-way movement of light and darkness. A sound eye not only allows light to enter but also perceives through that light, seeing reality as it truly is. An unhealthy eye, by contrast, both blocks the light and distorts what it perceives, casting shadows on reality. Jesus speaks of more than moral vision—he describes a spiritual way of seeing. The inner eye is both the window through which divine light enters and the lamp through which that light is expressed.

When the *nous* and heart are healed, they become transparent to God's light—we see and are seen rightly. ***To be pure in heart is to live in this reciprocity of illumination: receiving divine love without obstruction and reflecting that love outward without distortion*** (see 1 John 3:2, 4:16).

To see God, then, is to perceive this living flame within—the warmth of perfect love that dispels the coldness of accusation. As divine love softens our inner harshness and casts out fear, it frees us to see others through the same lens of compassion (see 1 Peter 1:22, Acts 15:19). The one who truly sees God no longer stands above others in condemnation but beside them in love—beholding through God's own eyes, with the gaze of communion, where every face becomes a reflection of the One who is Love (Genesis 1:27, Colossians 3:11).

"With All My Heart"

Such vision is not abstract; it takes shape in how we live—and how we respond to those who have wounded us most deeply. One powerful example of this kind of sight comes from Corrie Ten Boom, a Dutch Christian who, along with her family, hid Jews from the Nazis during World War II.

Years later, while speaking at a church in Munich about God's forgiveness, one of the former SS guards from Ravensbrück—the very camp where her sister had perished—extended his hand, saying, "How good it is to know that all our sins are at the bottom of the sea."

Corrie froze. Memories of cold barracks, cruelty and loss flooded back. In that moment, she realized she could preach forgiveness all she wanted—but now she was being asked to live it. She prayed silently,

"Jesus, help me."

As she reached out her hand, she felt "a current" pass from her shoulder down her arm into his. Tears came as she said,

"I forgive you, brother. With all my heart."

In that instant, she felt the love of God more intensely than ever before.[5]

Her forgiveness was not denial but divine sight—the kind of vision that perceives God even within the one who caused the pain. This is the purity of heart Jesus speaks of: a healing of vision until love becomes not merely what we feel, but the truth by which we see and live.

Summary

The essence of this Beatitude's promise is to see as God sees—not through injury or ideology, but through communion, in love. Such vision restores what exile scattered and transforms pain into peace.

I invite us, then, to yield to this promise—***to let our vision be born of love until it becomes the very light by which we see.*** From this place, we live as peacemakers—children who bear the likeness of their Father, able to stand in