

Briefing Document: "Happy Are the Holy: Lesson 29"

June 29, 2025

The sermon, delivered in the context of a Fourth of July celebration, weaves together themes of American patriotism, spiritual freedom, and the essential concept of "purity of heart" as defined by Christian theology, particularly through the lens of the Beatitudes and the story of Nicodemus.

I. American Patriotism and Spiritual Freedom

A significant portion of the sermon is dedicated to expressing gratitude for the freedoms enjoyed in the United States, particularly in the lead-up to the Fourth of July. This gratitude is directly linked to the ability to worship freely without punishment.

- **Thanksgiving for Freedom:** The speaker opens by thanking "Heavenly Father Lord, we thank You for this morning, Father, that we get to come into Your house, Lord and to worship You, to look at Your Word and as we mentioned earlier, that we can do so without being punished, and Father, we can attribute that, Lord, to the freedom that we enjoy in this country."
- **Acknowledgement of Service Members:** The sermon explicitly connects national freedom to the sacrifices of military personnel: "we just are mindful of those servicemen and women that have provided us the freedoms that we have that we enjoy."
- **Call for Godly Leadership:** There is a prayer for "godly wisdom to come upon the leadership in this country that You would be able to take over Lord and I pray for the hearts and minds of all those that they would be turned to You in Jesus name."
- **Patriotic Displays:** The congregation recites the Pledge of Allegiance, sings "The Star-Spangled Banner," "Battle Hymn of the Republic," "America the Beautiful," and "God Bless the USA."
- **Reflection on "God Bless the USA":** The speaker notes a past difficulty in singing "God Bless the USA" due to a perception that the nation was "not very blessable," emphasizing a desire for the country to "continue to make an attempt to follow God's vision."
- **Nation Founded on Biblical Principles:** The closing prayer reiterates the belief that the nation "was born on biblical principles," seeking God's glory through the conduct and "fruits" of its citizens.

II. The Sermon on the Mount: The Beatitudes and Purity of Heart

The core theological discussion revolves around Matthew 5:8, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God," within the broader context of the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12).

- **Deep Truth of "Purity of Heart":** The speaker emphasizes the profound and immeasurable depth of this truth: "this is one of those truths to attempt with this statement in verse 8 is an incredible statement blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." He acknowledges its foundational nature throughout the Bible, running "the entire width of the Bible."
- **Contextual Approach:** The speaker plans to explore the historical and chronological context of this Beatitude, questioning its specific placement in the sequence: "why isn't this the first beatitude why isn't this the last beatitude why isn't this beatitude perfectly in the middle."

III. Israel's Spiritual Condition and the Problem of Legalism

To understand the context of Jesus's teaching on purity of heart, the sermon delves into the spiritual state of Israel during Christ's ministry, highlighting the oppressive nature of the legalistic system imposed by the Pharisees.

- **Spiritual Tumult:** Israel was "desperate" economically, politically, and "most importantly they are spiritually in tumult." Their spirituality had become "questionable to themselves."
- **Pharisaical Legalism:** The Pharisees are identified as the "dominant force" who engineered a "very burdensome oppressive authoritative legalistic system." This system "tended to dominate the scene" and "draws such absolute parameters around what was in this instance spiritually acceptable that by its very character the Judaism which the Pharisees taught and lived by was oppressive and it was desired to hold people down."
- **Misinterpretation and Self-Made Laws:** The Pharisees "misinterpreted the law of Moses" and "invented a bunch of new laws that they could keep" to feel good about themselves. However, the problem was that "they couldn't keep those either because how can you keep a law if you don't have a proper heart."
- **Frustration, Guilt, and Anxiety:** This relentless imposition of rules led to "a tremendous sense of guilt as well as frustration and anxiety" among the populace who, despite being "very, very, very committed to God," knew they "couldn't do it."

- **Legalism's Purpose:** The speaker states, "legalism is designed to keep you down." It offers salvation conditional on works: "legalism would say you can have salvation, but you need to do this, or you need to do that."

IV. The Longing for a Redeemer and the Role of John the Baptist

The spiritual burden of legalism created a deep longing for forgiveness and a savior, which John the Baptist's ministry addressed.

- **Hearts Aching for Forgiveness:** People were "looking for a place to relieve the burden of their sin," their "hearts were literally aching for someone for someone who could forgive them." They desired "salvation" and "tranquility."
- **Need for Forgiveness, Not More Rules:** The people "didn't need any more rules they didn't need any more laws they didn't need another rabbi to come and write another rule for them to keep what they needed was someone to come that would forgive them someone that would come and heal their broken heart."
- **Knowledge of a Redeemer:** Jews knew from scripture (Isaiah, Ezekiel) that "there would come someone who would forgive their sin someone who would take away their iniquity someone who would write the wrongs... God was going to wash them with water and they would be clean and God was going to take away their stony heart and put in them a heart of flesh."
- **John the Baptist's Success:** John's "astoundingly successful" ministry was due to his announcement of the Messiah: "he announced there was coming a Messiah. He announced that there was coming a redeemer. He said there's a savior that's coming." People "wanted to unload the burden of sin in their life and to seek the forgiveness that the Messiah could give them."

V. Nicodemus and the Question of Righteousness: Being Born Again

The encounter between Jesus and Nicodemus illustrates the fundamental question of how to achieve righteousness and Jesus's answer: spiritual rebirth.

- **Nicodemus's Honesty and Frustration:** Nicodemus, "the ruler in Israel" and an expert in divine principles, came to Jesus at night, believing Jesus was "a teacher come from God." He was "a very, very frustrated man" with a heart "filled with anxiety."
- **The Unasked Question:** Nicodemus's "great big beautiful question" was, "What do I have to do, God, to be in Your kingdom what do I have to be to be a child of God what

I have to do so that God will redeem me?" The speaker notes that Nicodemus "never even ever asked his question... Jesus answered his question."

- **Jesus's Answer: Born Again:** Jesus's direct and emphatic answer to Nicodemus's unasked question was, "Most assuredly some versions will say 'Truly, truly I say to you unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God'."
- **Personal Application:** The speaker directly challenges the audience: "are you born again, are you sure this morning as you sit here... are you sure you have been born again?" He equates reluctance to seek this assurance with foolishness, recalling his own past "moron" state before desiring righteousness.
- **Ease of Accepting Christ:** When the speaker finally decided to "give it to Jesus to celebrate Jesus in my life it was the easiest thing I've ever done."
- **Invitation to Salvation:** The sermon concludes with a direct invitation for anyone who has not "been born again" to come forward for prayer and to allow "the Lord to be the Lord of your life." Baptism is also mentioned as a public display of obedience.