

Am I on? There I am.

Am I on that? There I am. There I am. Good morning.

I don't know why this is so hard for me. After 27 years in ministry, I still cannot figure out left from right when it's behind my back. I was at Springville State park this morning doing the chapel service. It was freezing cold. There were about 12348 people in the room.

Had a great time. But I am thankful for you all, and I am thankful for Hedgesthem. Can I get an amen? Yes. I want to start in an unexpected way by taking you back to 1951.

How many of you all were alive in 1951? How many of you remember 1951 pretty well. Does anyone remember the game, football game between Princeton and Dartmouth? If you do, I don't want you to call me out on any facts I get wrong on this game. So there was a football game between Princeton and Dartmouth, 1951.

By all accounts, it was a brutal. It wasn't just a bad score, it was like, physically brutal. A Princeton player broke his nose. A Dartmouth player broke his leg. Fights broke out after the game, the crowds stormed the field, and fist fights broke out between the two opposing sides.

And afterwards, each side claimed the other side started it. Does this sound like your house? So psychologists a couple years later were looking at this and asking the question, why did each school have a different understanding of what had happened? So they proposed this simple test. They had students watch film highlights of the game, and then they would pretend to be the refs.

The two different sets of students had such different perspectives on what actually happened that the psychologists concluded it was like each side, the Princeton side and the Dartmouth side were watching two entirely different games. As they said, it seems clear that the game actually was many different games and that each version of the events that transpired was just as real to a particular person as other versions were to other people. In other words, Princeton fans wanted Princeton to look good, and Dartmouth fans wanted Dartmouth to look good. Each side saw what they wanted to see. The idea that we see what we want to see is called motivated perception.

That's a big word, and you can throw that out free of charge this morning. I'm offering it to you. Motivated perception. This is the concept where we come to conclusions that we're already predisposed to believe in. Now we see this all the time.

Any teachers in the room? Have you ever had a conversation with a parent who absolutely cannot comprehend that? Little Timmy a problem

in the classroom because mom and dad think little Timmy is just an angel. Just little angel. They can't imagine and they can't see that.

Tim is the problem. Of course, maybe in travel where you say, ah, the French, they're so rude and obnoxious. Well, maybe if that's what you're looking for, you will find evidence of that. But if you're not looking for it, and I've been to France a couple times, I've not seen that. But motivated perception, maybe we see it in politics, you think, where?

Where? Well, my guy, yes, I know he exaggerates a little bit. And yeah, that's, those facts were not right according to that study. But if you look at the nuance and if you look at the bigger picture, and yes, the other guy, however, big fat liar, liar, liar, pants on fire, motivated perception. We see what we want to see here in Matthew chapter five.

Jesus recognizes the idea of motivated perception in a very interesting way. Now see if you can catch it. Let's read it together. Matthew chapter five. When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down.

His disciples came to him and he began to teach them. And he said, let's just read this together. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Now did you catch it, that last verse? Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Or as we might say, the pure in heart. See what they want to see. Now if you're thinking, Tim, that can get you into trouble. Yeah, maybe. But in this instance it's great.

So you're thinking, I want to see God, but I'm not pure in heart. I guess seeing God is out of the question for me. I get it. I have that as well, that issue. But.

So we're going to look at a couple of other scriptures just to kind of unpack what Jesus might mean when he's saying that one of the first passages that I am that come to my mind is from psalm 23 four. It's a 24 three and four, the psalm of David. And he writes this, who may ascend the mountain of the Lord, who may stand in his holy place. In other words, who will see God? Who will be with God and see God.

Well, verse four says it this way. The one who has clean hands and a

pure heart, who does not trust in an idol or swear by a false God. David says that if you want to be in God's presence, he describes that like a mountain. You need clean hands and a pure heart. Now, clean hands simply means that your hands are not up to no good.

You know what I mean when I say that we won't go into that. Your hands are doing what they should be doing, not what they shouldn't be doing. The pure heart is a little bit more interesting to define. So when you think about things that are pure, you might be wearing a sweater that is pure wool. That means that there's no other fabrics in it.

It is straight from the lamb, cleaned up, maybe a little dye in it to make it a pretty color, and then formed into a sweater. And you put it on, and it's pure wool. You got to be very careful with it, how you wash it, because if you don't treat it right, it'll shrink up. Pure wool. Maybe you're a stickler for organic juices, and you only drink pure juice.

That means it's not been watered down, no sugars, no additives have been added to it. It's pure. So when we're talking about the pure heart, David says, he says it's not adulterated. It's not polluted by other things. And he speaks specifically to this idea of idols or false gods and false gods.

If we open that definition up a little bit and take it away from a little stone or metal thing that sits on your table in your home in Israel in this time period, and we open it up and we broaden it up, it would be any influence, it would be any behavior. It would be any thought or belief that draws us away from God. Are you with me on that? So those with pure hearts keep their heart and their mind focused on good and true things. Or as Paul talks about in Philippians four, eight things that are true, things that are noble, things that are right, things that are pure, things that are lovely, things that are admirable, anything is excellent or praiseworthy.

Remember this passage. Paul says, think about these things. Pure mind. Keep your thoughts pure. And then he says, and whatever you have learned or received or heard from me or seen in me, put it into practice.

Do something with that. It says, if you do that, if you keep your heart and your hands pure and clean, then you will experience God. He finishes off by saying, the God of peace will be with you. So live this way, and you'll experience God's peace. You'll experience God's presence.

You'll see what you truly want to see? So this morning, what do you want to see? Do you want to see God now? Before you just answer, yes, of course I want to see God. I will be honest, there are several times where if God showed up unexpectedly, I'd be like, oh, can you give me

five, give me five minutes.

I'll get things tidied up and get my life back sorted out, and then we'll talk to you. Then you can come in, I'll make some coffee, and we'll have a great time. Remember last week when Alan talked about his escapade on the motorcycle and going home? His expectation was that his dad was going to crack the whip figuratively over him, and he was going to be in big trouble. Was Allen excited to get home and see his dad?

No, he was not. Think about Adam and Eve in the garden after they sinned. Were they excited to meet up with God again that evening? No, they hid. Sin creates a hesitancy.

Let's just be kind and call it hesitancy. Sin creates a hesitancy to truly experience God's presence. When our hearts are not pure, we naturally think twice about inviting God's presence in or entering into God's presence. This is half the reason we stay home from church, isn't it? We're like, oh, this is a bad week.

I better not go. I need to get things straightened up. I need to get my life sort of sorted out before I go back to church. That's not what we, that's not what we do. We'll talk about that in just a second.

But there are ways that we can keep our hearts pure. It's pretty simple. A couple Wednesday nights ago, we were in the men's group back there in the back. Any guys want to show up for that? It is.

It is excellent. And we talked about this, the things that keep us from really understanding and knowing and seeing God. And oftentimes it is unconfessed sin. Now, keeping our relationships clean and pure means owning up to our stuff with each other. Now, again, I speak from personal experience.

None of us like to take the blame when something goes wrong, do we? We like to be able to point to someone else. Our brother or our sister or our husband or our parents or our childhood or the boss at work. That's why this happened. I did that because of that or that person.

We do not like to take responsibility for our own actions. But the Bible says this is the first step in keeping our hearts pure. The Bible describes this as confessing our sins. So confession, admitting straight up. Yeah, I didn't do what I should have done or I did what I should not have done.

We confess our sin. John tells us this in one. John 119. He says, if we confess our sins, if we own up to what we did wrong, God is faithful. That means he's consistent.

God is consistent and he is just. He's right. He is consistent and

right to forgive us our sins. Don't you love that? He will cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

He will make our hearts pure again. God wants to forgive you. It's not like God likes to hold grudges. He doesn't. He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.

Now, sometimes when we confess our sins or before we confess our sins, we would rather do something really nice. Like, I know that when, when something's not happened the way I wanted it to happen, sometimes there are people in my house who will try to do extra stuff, like, oh, I'm gonna just go mow the yard on my own because I really just want to mow the yard. Or look how well I clean my room. That's great. That's amazing.

But it still doesn't address what did not happen the way I wanted to happen. Sometimes we do that, don't we? Rather than confess our sins to God, we really double down on good stuff. Like, I'm going to volunteer at the shelter. Oh, I'm going to do this.

I'm going to give an extra bit of tithe. I'm going to really sing loud this morning just so I don't have to actually say I'm sorry. Now, David says it this way, Lord, you're not that interested in those kinds of sacrifices. In psalm 51, he says, here's the kind of sacrifices God is interested in, a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart. And he says, if we come to God with a broken and contrite heart, then again, he is faithful and just.

He will not despise that. He will say, yes, you are forgiven. Confess. Just say, Lord, I'm sorry. I did it.

I did it. I own it. It was me. Confess your sins and then accept God's forgiveness. Do you ever wonder if God gets tired of forgiving you?

In Matthew 18, there's this account where Peter comes to Jesus and says, Lord, how many times am I going to let him get away with that? How many times can I put up with that before I say, no, I'm not forgiving you anymore? Should it be, I don't know, seven times? And Jesus says, I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to 77. Or as Alan said last week, seven times seven or 70 times seven.

The Hebrew is a little ambiguous there, but either way, at least 490 times, if we can take God as his word four to nine times, you gotta forgive someone. Now, does God set that limit for himself? Okay, John. Yeah. Yeah, I'm sorry, John.

That was 489 mess ups there. You got one more shot, John, and then it's. And then you're done. Is that the nature of God? No, it is not.

Jeremiah 31 says this, I love you with an everlasting love. You got

several more shots before you come to the end of everlasting love. Everlasting love. That means that we can go back to the well of God's mercy and forgiveness daily, hourly, by the minute. For some of us, we can go back as often as we need to go back to that well of forgiveness.

God loves to forgive, accept God's forgiveness, and then don't live in condemnation. I tell you, last Wednesday night, talking about this just stirred up a lot of stuff with me. Guilt and shame have a good purpose in our lives. Can we just say that guilt and shame serve a very valuable purpose in our lives, especially if there's stuff that we need to make right? But once we confess our sins and once we have accepted God's forgiveness, guilt and shame become less helpful.

In fact, they become dangerous. It's like taking medicine that is not prescribed for you anymore. It can do some damage. We don't live in condemnation. The scriptures say that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

And how are we in Christ Jesus? By living in this place of confession and forgiveness, openness before God. We are in the heart of Jesus when we're living in this place. And if we're living in that place, there's no condemnation. There's two wells I talked about.

The first one, the well of forgiveness, the well of mercy. But there's another well, the well of shame. And a lot of us drink a lot from the well of shame. We live there right around. We just cluster around that well and we dip in all the time.

We love to go to that well. We don't love it, but we feel like we've got to be there. One of a friends who's a therapist talks about this idea of trauma and moving beyond trauma. And one of the things they said, I thought was very insightful. They said, listen, if someone is not living and affected by their trauma, there's not a lot of good in bringing it up and rehashing because that just brings trauma back into their lives.

So here's some free therapy for you. If you're functioning despite your trauma, you don't have to go back and revisit it. There's no real value in doing that. Let me say this then, about guilt and shame. You do not need to go back and live in guilt and shame for something that has been forgiven.

It doesn't bring you into life. It doesn't do anything positive. They're just feelings. They do nothing to change the world or your life. Land there and don't live there.

Go daily to the well of mercy, but do not make repeated visits to the well of shame. Instead, accept God's mercy forgiveness with gratitude. And then we talked about this a couple of weeks ago. Do the next right

thing. Do the next right thing.

Do the next right thing. Now again, let's use Bible language for this. So doing the next right thing for a Christian is cooperating with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is prompting you. The Holy Spirit is telling you what the next right thing is.

You're not thinking up this stuff on your own. You're saying, Lord, what is the next right thing? Oh, oh, okay. Yes, I'm going to go do that. The gift of the Holy Spirit is God's transforming presence in our lives.

Psalms 51. Again, David says this. Create in me a clean heart. Lord, you know my heart. You know how gunky it is.

You know the places where it is just, I just, it just seems to be dark and cobwebby in there. Create in me a clean heart, God, renew a right spirit within me. Do what only you can do, God, we pray. Do what only you can do. And then I, Tim, will do what God has told me to do.

What is the next right thing?

What Paul wrote to Timothy is instructive, I think, for us because there are some things that we can do. I believe that God's gift of salvation is not on my own merits. I don't deserve salvation. But when he calls me to walk in him and to walk in the light as he is in the light, there are ways and habits and understandings that I need to own. And one of them is this.

I need to flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness. So what does that mean? That means I say no to the stuff that's done me no good and done no one else any good. I'm going to turn my back on that and I'm going to walk towards righteousness. I'm going to walk towards the next right thing, faith, love and peace.

Paul tells Timothy, along with all of those. So you're not walking alone. You're walking along beside those who are also calling on God from a pure heart. You've got people on this journey with you now. Just think about this really quick, though, before we move to that.

We are in the habit of thinking that we cannot control our thoughts. They just come in. And maybe you thought that, too. They just come in, and we have no control over where those thoughts come from. Hogwash.

We do have control. If we don't, then Paul is making stuff out of thin air. Cause he says that we've got to demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God. We gotta knock those things out. We have control over what thoughts set themselves up in our brain.

I would say we have control over what thoughts get in there in the first place. We put ourselves in positions where we are exposed to stuff that we know we shouldn't be exposed to. Anyone? Anyone with me on this. We go places, we hang with people, we watch things that put thoughts in our head.

Now, you can say, I don't know where that came from. Yeah, you do. Yeah, you do.

Be mindful of what you're exposing yourself to, because those thoughts get in there. And I tell you, I speak from personal experience. Once they're in there, they are a bear to get out. Can I get an amen? Amen.

Here's the deal. We are responsible for the habits of our thinking. The old idea that we cannot keep evil thoughts, we cannot help evil thoughts has become so ingrained in our minds that most of us accept it as fact. But if it is true, then Paul is talking nonsense when he tells us to choose our thinking. This is a quote from Oswald Chambers.

A great thought. It arrested me this week. I go, oh, man, that is good. We have authority over what gets to have free reign in our heart and mind. So again, corinthians tells us to take captive every thought and make it obedient to Jesus.

Every thought. Now, this requires discipline. And I don't know about you, but I don't like discipline. I'm not big on discipline, but this requires discipline. Now, here's where something that's a little awkward comes into play.

It helps if you've got someone with you. So, John and Trudy back there. John and Trudy, stand up. We got a picture of him up here, don't we? Do we have a good picture of them?

There they are. Look at them. 241 and 240. How come he got the. The first number?

You got the bigger number, though. Look at them. Look how sharp they look. They just ran a marathon. They're amazing people.

You can sit down. You've ran. You've ran a marathon. You don't have to stand too long. I know because I got a pretty good idea of how John Flynn's brain thinks.

I know that there are mornings where he'd be like, I don't want to go run a marathon. Can we just sit on the porch and drink coffee? I bet Tim's on his porch drinking coffee. We can just go hang out with Tim and drink coffee. And I'd say, come on over.

Yeah. I'm not going to encourage him to go run a marathon. I don't want to run a marathon. But you know who will encourage him to go run

that marathon? Trudy.

Trudy will say, no, no, no. Come on, come on. You've had one cup of coffee. That's good. Let's go.

Get your feet under you. Now. I can't imagine this, but I'm sure that there's probably some element of Trudy where she has days, too, where she's like, oh, there's other things I gotta do. We got a busy week. I don't know that.

Do we have to walk a mile today? We can miss a day, couldn't we? And on those days, John says, trudy, come on. Come on. You made me walk the marathon last week.

I'm gonna make you walk a mile right now. It's helpful when we have other people in our lives to keep us on track, isn't it? It's very helpful. So Paul says, find a friend. Find a friend.

He says this. Find a friend that you can talk honestly with about your stuff. And James says, therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other. All that's saying is, find someone that you can share your life with, your struggles with, so they can pray for you, so that you can be healed, so that you can live and walk in righteousness. That's the goal, isn't it?

That's the goal. So find a friend to share your stuff with. Then the last thing is this. And I'm going to invite Darren to come up in a little bit to explain what all this is. This is a Darren swangle moment over here.

So get real excited. Cause it's gonna be interesting. But the thing that I want to leave us with is this. We are loved deeply by God. With all your stuff.

You are loved deeply by God. In John, chapter three, it says this. See what great love the Father has lavished on us that we should be called children of God. You are sons and daughters of God. And he doubles down.

He says, that is really what you are. It's not just words you talk over yourself. It's what you really are. Look at verse two. Dear friends, now we are children of God.

Catch this. And what we will be has not yet made known. In other words, we're not there yet. No one's perfect yet. But you're a child of God now.

When Jesus appears, when Christ appears, we shall be like him. For we shall see him as he is. And all who have this hope in him purify themselves just as he is pure. Our hope in Jesus acts as a purifying

agent for us. We hope to see him.

And if we hope to see him, the scriptures say, we will. We will see what we want to see. Revelation is clear. Every eye will see Jesus when he returns. But will those eyes see him with fear, or I with joy?

If we yield to the shaping of the Holy Spirit, God transforms us into this new creature, this son or daughter that looks like him. And we will look like him at his appearing, and we'll be able to see him, and see him with great joy. The only way that the Holy Spirit can transform us, however, is for us to willingly give our lives to Jesus and ask him to do that cleansing work. Have you done that today? We're going to pray.

And if you have not made a decision to follow Jesus, talk to me. Heavenly Father, we pray that you would create in us a clean heart. You would renew a right spirit in us where we have faltered, where we have fallen. We pray now for grace to be lifted where we have withheld. We pray for the courage to reveal and to confess.

Lord, our desire is that we see you. And where our heart's desire is not there yet. We pray that by your Holy Spirit, you would prompt and move us in your direction as much as we are able. This morning. We pray, create in us a clean heart and renew a right spirit in us so that we can be pure of heart and see what we really want to see, which is you.

We pray this in Jesus name. Amen.

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