



NAC-USA  
DEVELOPMENT  
INSTITUTE

Pure in  
heart

# MIDWEEK SCRIPT

Who is  
worthy?

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**2018**

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November

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## Session 1 – Pure in heart

Hello and welcome to the first small group session for November. This month, we will be exploring the topic of “the future.” Specifically, in this session, seeing God now and in the future, and in the next small group session, worthiness.

For this week, we’ll actually start back at the Sermon on the Mount. The Sermon on the Mount is Jesus’ longest recorded teaching and can be found in the fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters of the Gospel of Matthew. Jesus addresses His disciples and the people. Throughout this message, Jesus takes what people knew from the Law of Moses, and He contrasts it with a picture of the new covenant and the future kingdom, taking the expectations from a purely legalistic approach to one of motive, love, and authenticity, more clearly defining how God expects us to interact with each other.

For instance, Jesus said, *You have heard that it was said to those of old, “You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgement.” But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of judgement.* Jesus goes on to say, *You have heard that it was said to those of old, “You shall not commit adultery. But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart”* (Matthew 5).

The words of Jesus have greater authority than those of Moses, the mediator of the law of the old covenant. In John 1:17, we read, *For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.* It is precisely this grace that the beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount testify of. The beatitudes are at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount and are the statements that all start with “blessed are....” Here, “blessed” implies consecrated and favored by God, which causes happiness and contentment. Those who are blessed no longer strive for other things because they are in one accord with God’s will. It is striking that Jesus blesses those whom one would not have expected to be blessed: the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, the merciful, the peacemakers, those who are persecuted, and, the verse I’d like to draw your attention to, the pure in heart. The full verse from Matthew 5:8 is, *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*

As a rule, the Bible understands the heart as the seat of the human will. Human motivations, intentions, and plans arise in the heart. Those who have a pure heart live in accordance with, and are motivated by, the will of God, as it is illustrated in the Ten Commandments, for example. They realize living by the laws of God brings meaning to their lives and they do not make evil plans, do not cheat or take advantage of their neighbor, or attempt to discredit anyone. The pure in heart desire good things for their neighbor and even do something good for their neighbor if they can.

Additional defining characteristics of having a pure heart means that we are aware of God’s grace, love, and support. When we have a pure heart, there isn’t room for envy or resentment. A pure heart thinks what is right, loves what is good, and desires what is best. However, purity of heart does not mean that we won’t sin. In 1 John 1:8, Apostle John says to believers that *if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.* Purity is about motivation. In our pure motivation, we will still stumble and make mistakes, but because our motivation is pure, the sin hurts us more. We see more clearly that what we did, or said, or thought wasn’t right, and this realization inspires us to repentance.

This beatitude says that the pure in heart will see God. We can read that Moses asked to see God’s glory, but he was denied this. Man cannot see God face to face. But those who are blessed are promised by Jesus Christ that they will be able to see God. In the future kingdom of the glory of God, they will have fellowship with Him. However, already today we can feel God’s nearness and see Him through the eyes of faith when we worthily partake of the sacraments. We see and experience God in the congregation when we see faithful brothers and sisters react to the circumstances in their lives with patience, love, and endurance.

We see God when we, with maturing faith and understanding, can reflect and see His presence and provision over the course of our lives. Having not just an assumption that God has been with us, but the knowledge based on true experience that God has been with us in the past gives us the confidence that God is with us now, and that He is shaping us and calling us into a marvelous future with Him. A future where those with a pure heart, a heart that is living in the accordance with God’s will, can see God.

## Session 2 – Who is worthy?

*Who is worthy?* This haunting question comes to us out of the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter of Revelation. Our sermons this month have focused on our future as a theme. One place in the Bible we can look for a future-oriented perspective is Revelation, whose writings are apocalyptic. *Apocalyptic* comes from a Greek word meaning to *reveal or uncover*. In the book of Revelation, a vision of the future is revealed to John, and so the book was named Revelation.

In the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter, John is shown the throne room of God and tries to describe what he sees and experiences there. We must remember that Revelation is full of descriptive imagery not easily understood by man. God is sitting on His throne with a scroll in His hand, which could be understood as His plan of salvation. And it is here that we hear this question that we began our session with today.

Let's read from the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter of Revelation:

*Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?" And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it. So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it. But one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep. Behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals."*

Let's take a closer look at these verses – perhaps we can interpret them this way:

*Who is worthy?* When John realizes that it seems like no one is worthy, even to look at the scroll, he weeps. We could see this sadness as a reflection of God's concern for His own creation, whom He loves. Among all the creatures in heaven and earth, there is no one who is worthy. So there is only one solution – God's only Son must take on flesh and come to earth to fulfill God's plan of salvation for humanity.

The elder tells John not to weep, *Behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed...* Here are names for the Messiah that we read in the Old Testament, and from this announcement, we would assume to see a conquering hero and king step up to take the scroll.

Let's keep reading:

*And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne...stood a Lamb as though it had been slain...He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders...saying with a loud voice: **Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!***

What a confusing and shocking sight that must have been! *A Lamb as though it had been slain...* Jesus Christ is the Lamb that was slain for the salvation of the world. The paradox of the names ascribed to Jesus is a testament of His suffering and victory. He is the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies. The triumphant Lion is the slaughtered Lamb. The mighty King is the crucified Savior. This is the mystery of God; that which seems like a defeat that ended in death, is actually the greatest victory.

There is only one who is worthy – Jesus Christ. He was the only One who could know and perfectly live out the will of God, the only One who could accomplish it. When we ponder this, we see that we can never be worthy of His kingdom. Perhaps we feel that pain John felt, knowing that no one is worthy. But we fall into the grace and righteousness of our Savior and Redeemer, as David lamented in 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel, *...let us fall into the hand of the Lord, for His mercies are great...* (2 Samuel 24:14). Jesus Christ has done this for us! And because of what He has done, He alone is worthy of praise and worship.

As we close our Season of Thanksgiving, let's focus our thoughts on the One who is worthy, and bring our praise and worship to Him, as the redeemed sang with a loud voice, **Worthy is the Lamb who was slain.**