

Fil-Am Community Church
Pastor Rolly Estabillo
6 April 2014
The Beatitudes part 4

“THE HOUSECLEANING CHOICE”

We are in the fourth week of an eight-week series called Life's Healing Choices. So before we move forward, let me take us backwards and review where we have been so far. We can sum up the first three weeks, the first three choices of this study I think in three short phrases. Please repeat after me: I can't, God can, Let it go. Let it go! Actually, it's Let God. Let it Go from the movie Frozen has become so popular that you hear it almost everywhere. And, if you have little children, you hear it every day and maybe you've seen the movie more than once, like me.

So, Week one was “I can't.” That's what we call the Reality Choice. “I realize that I am not God – turn to your neighbor and say, “You're not God”. I admit that I'm powerless to control my tendency to do the wrong thing and my life is unmanageable.” I can't.

Week two, – God can. Pastor Dave talked about it. That is what we call the Hope Choice. It says, “I earnestly believe that God exists. That I matter to him and that he has the power to help me change.”

So I can't, God can. Then...

Week three is Let God. That's what we call the Commitment Choice. That's what Barry talked about last week. Here's what that says: “I consciously choose to commit all of my life and will to Christ's care and control.” Let God. Let go and let God. That's what that means. Just let go and let God.

You say, “How do I let God? What does that mean? How can I let God make the changes in my life that he wants to make in my life?” That's what leads us to

the fourth choice. That's what we're going to talk about today. It's probably the toughest choice of all. It's called the Housecleaning Choice.

Before we even get into it I just want to say, let's be honest with each other here. All of us have failed, all of us have blown it. All of us have sinned. Nobody's perfect (except my mother). Other than that, none of the rest of us is perfect. The Bible says, "*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*" Romans 3:23

So, what is **The Housecleaning Choice**? It says, "**I openly examine and confess my faults to myself, to God and to someone I trust.**"

You're going, "Hold on a minute! I didn't sign up for any of this kind of stuff. To admit something to myself? Sure. I guess I can probably do that. To admit it to God? Yeah, maybe. It's not like he doesn't already know. But I am not about to just bare my soul for all the world to see."

I just want you to relax. We're not asking you to do that. God's not asking you to do that. He's not asking you to call the tabloids and create a scandal about your own life. But he is asking you to be honest. God is asking us for honesty. To be honest with him and with ourselves and with the people that are around us. It's because freedom is impossible without honesty.

The Bible says, John 8:32, "*Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free*" In other words, freedom is the reward of truth. Freedom is the reward of honesty. If we want to be free from all the stuff that we're carrying around in our lives, it begins with being honest with ourselves and with God and with the people around us.

So when your home group meet and you're on your fourth session, you're going to be talking about this whole idea of examining ourselves. What we call taking a moral or a personal inventory, this whole idea of confessing things to God, to ourselves and to other people.

I'm not going to talk about that very much today because that's what the home group session will be about.

My purpose this weekend is to help bring you hope and courage to take the steps necessary to move forward; to help us see how things can be, to see how things will be, and actually in a very real sense to see how things actually are right now.

I want to help us understand, maybe in a way we've never understood before, just how deeply God loves you. It's so important. Because when this whole issue, this whole idea of honesty starts to come up, a lot of us get kind of afraid; we get scared. "I don't want to go into this. It's too painful. I don't want to do this." We're afraid of it. But the Bible says, 1 John 4:18, "*Perfect love casts out fear.*" I believe that whenever I'm afraid of the truth, if you're afraid of the truth, it's because we don't fully understand how much God loves me. If I really understood the depth of his love there would be nothing to be afraid of.

I want to talk about this today. In order to do that we're going to look at the fourth Beatitude from the Sermon on the Mount that Jesus taught us. As you know, we have assigned a Beatitude for every week of Life's Healing Choices; so the Beatitude this week is the fourth Beatitude. It's in Matthew 5:8. "*Happy are the pure in heart, for they will see God.*"

The first thing I want you to notice is what it doesn't say. Jesus did not say "Happy are the religious in heart." It's happy are the pure in heart. Some of the most unhappy, sorry-mouth people I know are religious in heart. They're just miserable. They won't be happy until everybody else is as miserable as they are.

You know people like that? Don't look around. Their whole life is a bunch of rules. And because of that they don't get to enjoy life. Jesus says, "*I have come in order that you might have life--life in all its fullness.*" (John 10:10). Not that you

might have religion, but that you might have life. This point can be summed in these words:

1. Jesus doesn't want me to be *religious*. He wants me to be *real*.

"Happy are the pure in heart." Not the religious in heart.

In John 11 we read about the time when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. I want us to look at this for a moment, because there's a truth here that we need to discover. Remember the Bible doesn't just tell us the things that God did. The Bible tells us how God does things.

The Bible says this, John 11:43-44, *"Jesus cried with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come forth!' And he who had died came out bound hand and foot [picture that] with graveclothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, 'Loose him, and let him go.'"* It says he was bound hand and foot with graveclothes and his face was covered with a cloth.

There's significance there. That means that nothing that binds you up and keeps you from fullness of life, nothing that trips you up as you try to follow Jesus, nothing that covers you up and keeps you hidden from the rest of the world – none of that can withstand the life-giving power of Jesus Christ. Amen?

When you gave your life to Christ, the Bible says he brought you from death into life. It's just like Lazarus – you were brought from death into life. But there are still things in your life that keep you from fulfillment in your life. As we read a moment ago, Jesus said I came to give you fullness of life. But there are things that bind us up, that hold us back, that restrict us, that keep us from finding or reaching our full potential in life. There are things that still trip us up as we try to follow Jesus – old ways of thinking, old behavior patterns, addictions, all of that kind of stuff. There are still masks that we try to hide behind because we don't want people to see the real me. Jesus says I want to set you free from all of this

stuff. It's not just enough that I'm bringing you from death into life, but I want to bring you into freedom. And he does it through his people.

Look at that text in John 11. Look toward the end, "*Jesus said to them...*" Who are the "them"? "Them" are the disciples, his followers.

Jesus said to his followers, *you* loosen him and *you* let him go. Jesus does it through his people. That's why small group life is so important. That's why it's so important for all of us to be in relationship with other followers of Christ. It's about people helping other people to walk into freedom. The Bible says in Galatians 5:1, "*It is for freedom that Christ has set us free.*" It's not to bind us up and restrict us. It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Then Jesus says in John 8:36, "*If the Son has set you free, you will be free indeed.*" He says, "*Happy are the pure in heart.*" Not the religious in heart.

You say, "That sounds great but how is that possible to have a pure heart? Because I know me and when I look at me I don't see a whole lot of purity going on around here."

First, it's important to understand that you cannot make your own heart pure. Good behavior does not purify the heart. You can't just say, I'm going to clean up my act and behave myself and then I'll have a pure heart. Good behavior does not purify the heart. But a pure heart will change your behavior. How does that happen? Look at Romans 5:8 "*While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*" Jesus didn't wait for us to clean up our act. The only way to have a pure heart is through the blood of Jesus Christ, shed on the cross for your sins. Purity of heart is the gift of God's grace. You cannot earn it. You cannot buy it. The only way to get a pure heart is to surrender to him. Give your life to Christ. Let him forgive you of your sins and purify your heart, to give you a pure heart.

That's what the commitment choice was all about that Barry talked about last week. You commit your life to Christ; you receive his gift of forgiveness and of a

pure heart. If you have done that, that is how God sees you right now. He sees you right now as having a pure heart.

The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 5:17 *“Anyone who belongs to Christ Jesus has become a new person. [Has become, not will become, has become a new person.] The old life is gone and a new life has begun.”* And Jesus says *“Happy [or blessed] are the pure in heart, because they will see God.”*

You're still going, “I still don't see how this is possible. How can I have a pure heart when there's all of this stuff that's still in my life? How is that possible? Because, quite honestly, my mind is dirty. My hands are dirty. My mouth is dirty.”

Let me let you in on a dirty little secret. So am I. You think you're the only person in this place who doesn't still have to fight against temptation? You think you're the only person in this place who doesn't still lose his temper or do things you shouldn't do or say things you shouldn't say or think things you shouldn't think? There's not a person in this room who still doesn't have to fight temptation and struggle with sin. We are all in the same boat.

This is so important for us to understand. And this leads us to our second point:

2. The basis for a pure heart is not how good you've been. The basis for a pure heart is how good God is.

It's not how good you've been. It's how good God is. It's based on God's character not yours. It's based on God's actions, not yours. It's based on God's goodness, not yours. Your good behavior does not purify your heart. But a pure heart will change your behavior.

So my question is what does your heart want? Deep down inside, what does your heart want? Do you want to see God in your life? Do you want to experience him?

I think you do. The reason I think you do is because you're here. The very fact that you're here today is a reflection of the deep desire in your heart to have a relationship with God. And to have him make things right in your life that are not right.

Psalm 139 says, "*You have looked deep into my heart, Lord, and you know all about me.*" God knows all about you. He knows that you really want to be free. He knows that you don't want sin in your life. He knows that you want him to purify your heart. The only way to do it is to surrender to him. He promises if you surrender he will purify your heart. It does not happen overnight. It is a process. It's a lifelong process. And you have a role to play in that process. So do God's people who are around you. They have a role to play in that process in your life. Your role is to surrender. Your role is to cooperate with God in becoming what you already are. The Bible says in Romans 4:17, "*God calls things that were not as though they were.*" He sees you right now in Christ as already having a pure heart. So you are cooperating with him in becoming what you already are.

Let me explain that to you. Let me give you a couple of illustrations.

My most favorite mother-in-law Nanay Monet is a gardener. She is an amazing gardener. She doesn't just have a green thumb. She's got all ten fingers and all of her toes. Everything's green. She can woo and coax life out of anything. Now that it's Springtime, she'll go into action any moment. Last year, we had tomatoes, okras, squash, peppers, bittermelon, talbos ng kamote or sweet potato leaves, string beans, talong, at saka meron pa, labanos mustasa. One thing common about all of them is that they always start from a seed. That's what I see. I see her take a seed and stick it in the soil. Nanay, what she sees is the future. She sees what it is. She sees the fruit of her labor. She sees the color. She sees all the vegetables hanging from or sticking out of the stems. She can already see the basket of vegetables she's going to reap in the future. She calls things that are not

as though they were. And that's why she pours out all her love on these plants, from the time they are but a seed till they bear fruit. I see the seed in the ground. It looks like nothing. But she sees the future. She knows what it's going to look like.

Let me give you another illustration. If you go to Florence, Italy, you'll see Michelangelo's David. But he is not in boxer shorts. The story behind that magnificent sculpture is that Michelangelo said when asked, "How did you do that?" He said, "I just cut away everything that wasn't David."

The rest of us, if we were there before Michelangelo started sculpting away, all we would see is a big block of stone. That's all we see, just a big old ugly rock. But the master Michelangelo saw David in there. He cut away everything that wasn't David. So David became what he already was in the mind of his creator.

It's the same process with all of us. God has already declared your heart as pure. He already sees you in Christ as having a pure heart. Now you cooperate with him in the process of becoming what you are. The cutting away, the getting rid of the things that bind you and that trip you up and that cover you up. And God does it through his people. He just wants you to cooperate with him and let him do it in you.

If you fall down in the process, get back up. If you fall down again, get back up again. And if you fall down again, get back up again. This is where God's people come in. You need people around you who love you, who love the Lord, to help you get back up on your feet and keep moving forward in the right direction.

But the way things tend to be for me, and I have a feeling probably for a lot of us, is that when I fail, when I mess up, I want to hide from God. I don't want him to look at me. I can't talk to him. I sure can't read my Bible because I'd just be a hypocrite. I can't go to church. Worse, I stay away from my home group and Christian friends because I feel guilty, so I want to hide.

Don't ever let sin keep you from God. When you do that, you're just playing into the devil's hands because he wants to separate you from God. He wants to isolate you from fellowship. Don't ever let sin keep you from God. Sin should drive you to God.

Because that's the only place you're going to find forgiveness and mercy and hope and healing and the strength to get back up and move forward. When you sin, don't run from God.

3. The Bible says – he promises forgiveness 1 John 1:9, *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”*

Don't misunderstand me here. God is not soft on sin. He's not just some old man, winking his eye, “No big deal.” It is a big deal. He hates sin. It's what separates us from him. It's the reason that Jesus had to die for us. God hates sin. But he loves you. *He loves you.* And he promises to forgive you and to make your heart pure. So don't run from God when you sin. Run to God and receive forgiveness and the strength to get up and to keep moving forward.

Lamentations says *“Let us search and try [or test] our ways and turn again to the Lord.”* Why does the Lord want us to search our ways? Why does he want us to search our hearts? Why does he want us to take this kind of inventory? There are a couple of reasons I think.

One is that I can't really understand the fullness of God's forgiveness until I realize how undeserving I am. Jesus says in Luke 7:47, *“Whoever has been forgiven little loves little.”* It's equally true that he who has been forgiven much, loves much. But I think there's a second reason for this kind of heart search. It's because so much of our continuing struggles, so much of our behaviors now are tied to poor choices we've made in the past. They're the result of things, either

that we did or that were done to us, and those are the things that still shape our character, they shape our behavior, they have shaped our thoughts, they've shaped our lives. And those are the things, yes our sins are forgiven, but there are things that need to be taken away. We need to be unwrapped from the graveclothes, from the things that are restricting us, holding us back from fullness of life.

There are hurts that still have to be healed. There are habits that have to be broken. There are hang-ups that we have to get over.

God will do it. The Bible says in Philippians 1:6, *"I'm convinced that God, who began this good work in you, will carry it through to completion on the day of Christ Jesus."* And he wants to do it in your life but he wants you to cooperate with him.

You may think, if it's all forgiven then why can't I just carry on with my life? Go on my merry way? That's not how it works. The Bible says this in Philippians 2:12-13 *"Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear. For God is working in you giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him."* It says work hard to show the results of your salvation. You work out what God is working in. There needs to be in your life the demonstration on the outside of what God is doing on the inside. Just like the vegetables that show the new character of those tiny seeds. Just like David emerges behind all the stuff that gets cut away. God wants that. He wants that beautiful work of art so that the rest of the world will look at it and say, I need that in my life!

God does this cutting away, this cleansing work, this freeing work; he does it through his people. As they help you. As we help each other in following the Lord. As I said a moment ago, it doesn't happen overnight. It's a process. (pause)

You may be going through some difficult challenges at present. In fact, it's been going on for a while and you think, "It's like everything I try to deal with,

God just dumps something else on me. Just one thing after another. It's like he's building this case against me."

Friend, you have to see this, God isn't piling anything on you. He's taking stuff off you. God says, Let's deal with this behavior here. As he deals with that something else emerges. It's not God piling it on; he's taking it off. You cannot heal a wound until you expose it and cleanse it.

God doesn't want to load you down with guilt. He wants to free you up from guilt. He's setting you free. He's bringing you into freedom. It's for freedom that Christ has set us free.

I know there may be some here that say "That sounds really nice but you've got to understand the kind of stuff that I'm carrying. You don't know my past. You don't know my present. You don't know the guilt that I carry. You don't know the things that I've done and I'm still doing." I know there are some of us right here now, and you are living with the memory, a painful memory, maybe a horrible memory of things you've done in your life, things that are still going on in your life. There are people right here buried in guilt, paralyzed by it, of things that have happened, and things you've done in your life. You might be so addicted to things. Who knows what it is. There could be old ways of thoughts, old behavior patterns. You've tried over and over and over again to get free from them. You're going, this isn't working for me. I've tried it way too many times. It's too late for me. Every time I make this promise to God that I'll behave myself and clean it up, then I fail. Then I promise again and I fail again, and I promise again. That may work for other people, but it's just too late for me.

I'm here to tell you it is never too late. If you think you're too sinful for God, you're just what he's looking for. He's come to set you free. He's come to heal you and make your life right. You cannot come to grips with God's forgiveness until you come to grips with how much you need him to forgive you.

The longer I walk with Jesus Christ, the more convinced I am that I need a Savior. God help me if I ever get to the point where I think I've arrived. When you honestly examine yourself, the only conclusion you can come up with is you need a Savior. You need a healer. You can't do this on your own. But God promises forgiveness when you come to him with an open heart.

God isn't asking you to make a promise that you cannot keep. He's asking you to receive a promise that only he can keep. God promises forgiveness. He never breaks his promises. You have his word on it. He will not lie. He loves you. He cares about you and he wants to bring you freedom and wholeness. Not just to bring you from death into life, but from death into life in its fullness.

Look at these next two verses. The Bible says this in Psalm 32. The psalmist has been wrestling with his guilt and hiding from God. We get to verse 5 and he says this *"Finally I confessed all my sins to you and I stopped trying to hide my guilt. I said to myself, 'I will confess my rebellion to the Lord and you forgave me. All my guilt is gone."* And in James, the Bible encourages us to admit our sins to one another, *"Therefore [the Bible says] confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed."*

I know I've given you a lot to think about so far. I know that this is heavy stuff. Notice we haven't laughed a lot in this service. Because this is no joke. This is heavy stuff. I know that this kind of honesty with yourself and God and other people can be scary. I'm not denying that. But remember who we are in the message. I said, *"Perfect love casts out fear."* I want you to know how deeply God loves you. If you understand that he loves you, you don't have to be worried about it. Why be afraid of God when he loves you? Don't be afraid of the consequences. They've already been taken care of. He's paid for them. Just step into the freedom that God offers you.

And as I close this message, let me share a verse that expresses God's unending love for you.

“For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 8:38-39 (NIV)