

De Sales

SPIRITUALITY CENTER

"Seeing God...Single-hearted"



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The Sermon on the Mount is the first of five great discourses in the Gospel of Matthew. Jesus begins this discourse with the well-known Beatitudes, one of which is: "Blessed are the single-hearted; they shall see God."

There are a number of ways to describe the "single-hearted": those whose hearts are clean; those whose hearts have been purified; those whose motives are unadulterated; those who know themselves; those who are guileless; those who clearly know *why* they do *what* they do; those who are able to see the truth because they attempt to live it themselves.

You get the idea.

Francis de Sales offers a great deal of reflection upon this beatitude, this way of being "blessed". He looks to the example of the saints: "Consider that their legs, arms and heads are uncovered because in their thoughts, affections and deeds they have no purpose or motive but that of pleasing God." (Introduction to the Devout Life, Part I, Chapter 2)

Indeed, this sets the standard for being "single-hearted". Francis de Sales described it thus: "In the pursuit of virtue, the less we consult our own interests, the more the purity of divine love shines from those virtues." (IDL Part IV, Chapter 14)

Put another way, Francis wrote that "God seeks to lead us to great purity of heart, renunciation of all self-interest in what relates to God's service, and perfect self-denial." (Chapter 15)

The ultimate goal of the pure of heart, the ultimate goal of the single-hearted is union with the person whom we love. Francis wrote: "If I approach and join myself to another for no purpose other than to be near that person, and to enjoy this union, it is an approach of pure and simple union." (Treatise VII, Ch. 3)

Think about it. No matter how deeply we love another person, no matter how committed we are to doing what is right and just, no matter how pure our motives, there is always the temptation to love whom we love and to do what we do for less-than-noble or for self-serving reasons. What's in this for me? Will this help my career? Will this make me more popular? Does this make me feel good? Will this give me an advantage?

Francis de Sales offers a wonderful image in his Treatise on the Love of God of what it means to be truly single-hearted in the service of God, and by extension, in the service of our brothers and sisters: "One of the world's finest musicians, who played the lute to

perfection, in a brief time became so extremely deaf that he completely lost the use of his hearing. However, in spite of that he did not give up singing and playing the lute, doing so with marvelous delicacy by reason of his great skill which his deafness had not taken away. He derived no pleasure from his singing or in the sound of the lute, since after his loss of hearing he could not perceive their sweetness or beauty. Hence, he no longer sang or played except to entertain the prince whose native subject he was and whom he has a great inclination as well as infinite obligation to please...for this reason he had the very greatest pleasure in pleasing the prince and was overjoyed when the prince showed that he enjoyed the music." (Book IX, Chapter 9)

Single-hearted: doing what we do—being who we are—not because of any advantage/benefit to us, but ultimately doing what we do for God...and for our brothers and sisters. When we attempt to live this way, we will not only see God clearly in the next life but will indeed glimpse God in this life — seeing God in ourselves, seeing God in one another — making pure music to God through our motives of service to one another.