

Last week we discussed Charles E. Moore (1956- ), pastor in the Bruderhof Community, and **“Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.”** Our God is merciful so we should be merciful as well. Have you thought of this this week? Tolstoy (1828 – 1910) tells us that “loving activity is contagious” like the multiplication of the five loaves. Have you thought of this?

**Irenaeus** (ca. 120 – ca. 200) Bishop of Lyon, church father, and saint. Irenaeus was a Greek bishop noted for his role in guiding and expanding Christian communities in the southern regions of present-day France and, more widely, for the development of Christian theology by opposing Gnostic interpretations of Christian Scripture and defending orthodoxy.

**Matthew 5:8** – **“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.”**

“It is true, because of the greatness and inexpressible glory of God, that “man shall not see me and live,” for the Father cannot be grasped. But because of God’s love and goodness toward us, and because he can do all things, he goes so far as to grant those who love him the privilege of seeing him.....For “what is impossible for men is possible for God.”

Man cannot survive gazing upon the image of God. Why is this? How then is it possible for man to “see God”?

**Soren Kierkegaard** (1813-1855) – Danish Christian philosopher. Søren Aabye Kierkegaard was a Danish theologian, philosopher, poet, social critic, and religious author who is widely considered to be the first existentialist philosopher.

Existentialism - a family of philosophical views and inquiry that explore the human individual's struggle to lead an authentic life despite the apparent absurdity or incomprehensibility of existence. It's the idea of being born into a meaningless place that then requires you to make meaning. The absurd posits there is no one truth, no inherent rules or guidelines. This means you have to develop your own moral code to live by.

**James 4:8** – James wrote: “Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.” How does this scripture relate to Matthew 5:8? What is James telling us?

Kierkegaard says of a man that wills one thing and then another; “In the short-lived moment of delusion the worldly goal is therefore a multitude of things, and thus not one thing.” What is he saying?

“If it changes continually, then he himself becomes changeable, double-minded, and unstable. And this continual change is nothing else than impurity.” Kierkegaard is saying that a man that seeks the riches of this world will continually change what he wants and desires. He is thus unstable and double-minded. As opposed to this, the man who seeks God and the will of God has a single-minded goal and is stable in his life. Can you think of examples of this in those whom you are around and in contact with?

**Thomas Merton** (1915-1968) Trappist monk, bestselling author, and contemplative. Thomas Merton OCSO, religious name M. Louis, was an American Trappist monk, writer, theologian, mystic, poet, social activist, and scholar of comparative religion. He was a monk in the Trappist Abbey of Our Lady of Gethsemani, near Bardstown, Kentucky, living there from 1941 to his death.

Merton says; “The man of *right* intentions makes a juridical offering (a legal offer) of his work to God and then lunges himself into the work, hoping for the best. For all his right intention he may well become completely dizzy in a maze of practical details...”.

What is Merton saying about the man with the *right* intentions?

“But the man of simple intention works in an atmosphere of prayer: that is to say he is recollected. His spiritual reserves are not all poured out into his work, but stored where they belong, in the depths of his being, with his God. He is detached from his work and from its results. Only a person who works purely for God can at the same time do a very good job and leave the results of the job to God alone.”

What is Merton saying about the man with the *simple* intention?

What does it mean to be working “purely for God”?

**Brennan Manning** (1934-2013) Richard Francis Xavier Manning, known as Brennan Manning was an American author, laicized priest, and public speaker. He is best known for his bestselling book *The Ragamuffin Gospel*.

Manning wrote; “The sadness of not being perfect, the discovery that you really are sinful, is a feeling much too human, even bordering on idolatry. Focus your vision outside yourself on the beauty, graciousness, and compassion of Jesus Christ.”

What is Manning telling us about trying to be perfect and worthy?

Where should we be focusing our efforts?

“Accept being shipwrecked. Renounce everything that is heavy, even the weight of your sins. See only the compassion, the infinite patience, and the tender love of Christ. Jesus is Lord. That suffices.”

Why does Jesus being Lord suffice for our lives and the feelings of impurity?

“Your guilt and reproach disappear into the nothingness of non-attention. You are no longer aware of yourself, like the sparrow aloft and free in the azure sky. Even the desire for holiness is transformed into a pure and simple desire for Jesus.”

What does it mean to be “pure in heart”?

Go and let Jesus do the work of making you good. You will then experience the joy of being pure in heart and see God’s will in your life.