

I WANT TO SHARE WITH YOU my experience during a Zen and Christian Life worship service. We chanted Buddhist sutras and each person also read a passage from the Beatitudes. The passage I happened to read was, “Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.” I had heard this passage before, but it made a very strong impression upon me this time. What does it mean, to be pure in heart? This is a wonderful koan.

What does *heart* mean? It definitely does not mean our physical hearts. Heart is simply heart. *Mind*, a key term in Buddhism, is a synonym for the same thing. The Beatitudes also speak of spirit: “Blessed are the poor in spirit.” Do you distinguish between spirit, heart, and mind? I do not.

Of course, we can make up definitions, but these definitions will not reveal the true meaning of spirit, heart, or mind. In the *Heart Sutra*, or *Hannya Shingyo*, *shin* literally means “mind.” It also has another implication, which is “center.” *Spirit* also has many implications. If you were asked to define what spirit is, I am sure all of you would say different things.

At one extreme in our tradition, we say *mushin*, no-mind. At the other extreme, we say everything is *shin*, mind. Are that one mind and no-mind the same mind or different? If you say different, what is the difference? If you say the same, how is it the same? When we say body and mind, is that mind the same as no-mind, as one mind, as my mind, your mind?

“Blessed are the pure in heart.” What is heart? I feel that this heart must be the heart of God. Blessed is the one who is genuine enough to be in the heart of God. The Beatitude actually says, “They shall see God.” This is very interesting!

“They shall see God.” What does it mean? What is God? You might have a definition, but that is a definition, not God. We have a similar saying about seeing the Tathagata. “When you try to see the Tathagata with the forms, you won’t see him.” Form is the object of our senses, our perceptions. So how can you see God? Do you realize that everything you see is God?

We could rephrase it, “Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see the Buddha,” or “they shall see the dharma.” Consider what Dogen Zenji says about the Dharma Treasure. He says that the Dharma Treasure is pure and genuine, apart from dust.

When you see the dharma, you see the purity. When you are pure in heart, I am sure you also see the dharma. However, if you think to yourself, “I am pure,” to that degree you are still stained. That is because you hold on to your ideas about what is pure and what is not pure. You are comparing something that you think is pure with what you think is defiled. In other words, the relative is not truly pure. When you are pure in heart, when you do not hold on to such ideas and do not make comparisons, you see God, you see Buddha.

What is this defilement that is the opposite of purity? What defiles our hearts? “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” We have almost the same teaching in Buddhism. “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Lotus Land.” Isn’t it beautiful?

What does *poor* mean? Usually we say that having less than the average amount may be called poor. But what does it mean to be poor in spirit? We can say it means to have nothing in spirit. Nothing in spirit, nothing in mind, no-mind, no spirit. Then what remains? Just as it says: “the kingdom of heaven.” What a beautiful way to say it!

Usually we think of heaven as something limited, but these days even scientists are finding that the universe is constantly expanding. Can you imagine? It has no end. It is literally boundless. The kingdom of heaven literally means the kingdom of no limit. Boundlessness! No-mind, or we can say one mind. Everything is literally boundless, limitless. That is poor!

In Case 10 of the *Gateless Gate*,<sup>1</sup> monk Seizei begs Master Sozan, “I am poor and destitute. Please give me something.” Of course, Seizei is not literally begging for food or money. “I have

nothing,” he says, “do you have something to give me?” And Master Sozan answers, “You have drunk three cups of the best wine, and still you say that your lips are not yet moistened.” There is a beautiful connection between this koan and the Beatitudes. How can you be poor in spirit? The kingdom of God is in your heart. What does this mean?

For me, these Beatitudes are truly wonderful koans. Of course, we can say very superficially that in Christianity there is the dichotomy between creator and creation, but I do not agree. If you appreciate it only in this way, then you, like monk Seizei, are the one who will never be completely satisfied. I am sure of this. Maybe this is why some of you are doing Zen practice. If so, I guarantee that as long as you are in this frame of mind, you will not get much out of Zen practice, either.

See this purity. Be pure in heart. And if you truly want to realize the Lotus Land, be poor in spirit. How do you see the Way, the Lotus Land? How do you see the kingdom of heaven or see God? As Dogen Zenji says, “Forget the self.” This is the way to be pure. Drop off body and mind. This is the way to be poor. Christ says poor in spirit. Dogen Zenji repeatedly emphasizes that body and mind are not two separate things. When you say, “I am poor,” you are still carrying something. If you say, “I am genuine” or “I am pure,” to that degree something is still attached. So truly drop off body and mind, really forget the self.

Our very nature is poverty. We call this no-mind. Genuineness and purity, this is our nature. When you are really pure in heart, I am sure you will see your true nature. That is what each one of us should clearly experience. In a way we are doing it, but we must clarify the difference between the life that breathes and is alive at this very moment, and our thoughts of what and how it is. When we are truly humble, thoroughly surrendering to the dharma, then we are able to be poor, to be pure.

In our tradition, our practice focuses on this point. When you see the no-mind that is poor in spirit and when you see the no-nature that is pure in heart, surely you see the Buddha. That is your true nature, the best Way. If you do not experience this for yourself, it does not

matter whether you are Christian or Buddhist, you will struggle with yourself.

As a human being, what is the difference between you and me or between Buddhist and Christian? Even among Buddhists and among Christians there are different approaches. But what we appreciate should not be different, however we express it. If we can selflessly experience the existence of God, I am sure we will know the Savior.

So it seems to me that we should be aware of how each one of us, as an individual, can literally be pure in heart. How can we be poor in spirit, humble? When we suffer, what really causes our pain? There is separation, alienation. Why does it happen? Because we are not poor, we are not humble, we are not pure. When you take care of this, it is what we call *kensho*, seeing God, realizing the kingdom in your heart as the place where you live. This is the Lotus Land.

Of course, just seeing this is not enough. You must live that life. When we have difficulties or troubles, peace of mind is not something that comes from outside, but something you find inside yourself. How can we open up this limitless life and extend this boundless land? This is our practice.

[1.](#) *The Mumonkan*, a famous collection of Zen koans—Eds.