



Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. **AMEN**

Today is All Saints Day. It is a very special festival in the church that enriches the worship lives of all who observe it. It is a day on which we are edified by the lives of the saints, even the saints of ancient times. We recall faithful men and women of Scripture, both Old and New Testament. And we praise God for their examples. On occasion faithful Christians do become well known, like Augustine or Luther. But all saints are known by God and the people whose lives they have touched. So today, after this message, we will personally remember the loved ones, friends and mentors now living in heaven whose faith in Christ inspired us and gave us joy. And so for all the past, present and future saints, we glorify God not just for the faithfulness of these saints, but most of all for His faithfulness to the saints. For it is only by the perfect life and saving death of Jesus Christ, that Christians are made saints, in the sight of God.

So now you ask, why do we have this reading in Matthew's Gospel this morning as our saintly message? Why are the Beatitudes chosen in this lectionary cycle for All Saints Sunday?

Well, the Beatitudes, which come as the beginning of Jesus' most famous sermon, The Sermon on the Mount, are some of the most quoted phrases in all of Scripture, right behind John 3:16 and Psalm 23. In these opening statements, due notice, that the first word Jesus uses here is "Blessed". Jesus was sitting on the mountainside with the disciples and he uses the Greek word "Makarios" which means blessed, fortunate, happy or privileged. Seems like a funny word to use in the context of these statements. Certainly the poor in spirit, those who mourn and the meek are not fortunate to be in their present

circumstances. They are not at all happy in the usual sense. Because of their present state it is pretty much assumed that they are not feeling too blessed.

The blessing lies in being a part of the kingdom of God that exists both in the present and in the future. If we listen carefully to these beatitudes, the verbs that are used are “are” and “will”. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Jesus, I think is pointing out that mourners are mourning, right now today, but they will be comforted, they will be blessed when God brings about the new creation.

In this new creation that we should aspire to will give us hope that we will not have to live in the world around us, but rather strive to live today according to the values of the kingdom of God. The values that Jesus is talking about here are found in faith filled followers; those who show mercy, strive for peace, are pure in heart. The kingdom of heaven is not only for the poor in spirit but folks, good news here, it is for all believers.

We can see God’s kingdom in the people we call our saints. The signs of the kingdom are the people who live according to its values, these values Jesus is teaching his disciples and us in this Sermon on the Mount. They assist in bringing the kingdom about when they demonstrate mercy and work for justice and peace. But you say, AH, since when can we bring the kingdom to fulfillment. Correct, such work is not for the saint alone but for the King of the kingdom, Jesus Christ to make all things new. Remember that God will guide you, guide all the saints to the springs of the water of life, because all things are possible with Christ.

Since Jesus spoke these beatitudes, there has been a great processional, a parade if you will, moving toward the throne of God. That processional has been moving now for over 2000 years. We walk with those who have been sanctified by Christ, yes with sometimes sadness along the way. We walk toward the kingdom of God and join their work today as people of God living according to the kingdom values as outlined by Jesus. With the help of God our blessings reside in both the present and the future.

And you and I are blessed to be part of that parade of believers. We are blessed to belong to the kingdom that is moving ever towards a new creation. We are blessed to join in acting in ways that bring about the kingdom. And we

are ultimately blessed that we are able to live in God's kingdom on earth as we wait to be with Jesus in heaven.

Yes, folks, the kingdom is open to everyone. The message of the Gospel, the Beatitudes, is God's invitation through His Son, to all people. All will be blessed not just the wealthy or the famous, but also the poor in spirit, the meek, the mourning, the hungry and the list goes on. That is Jesus' invitation to us. No matter where we are in our life's journey, we are invited to the kingdom. We simply need to believe in the power of the one who God sent to save us from lives of destruction. Jesus says, "rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven". We are all invited to enjoy that great reward secured for us by Christ, who died on the cross to provide for us that kingdom come.

So no matter who we are, how big, how tall, how rich, how poor, God blesses us each day. And the greatest blessing he has given us is sending His Son Jesus to earth to walk with us. Through Him we are saved to life eternal. God's grace is shed on all believers.

This is most certainly true and I think that every Sunday should be All Saints Day. Whenever we sing a hymn, read the Scriptures, pray or preach we are dependent on those who have gone before us. Dependent on them to give us the words, tell us the stories, teach us the melodies to praise God and grow in our faith. None of us comes to worship alone. We are in fellowship with all the saints who have prepared the way for us to enter God's kingdom.

In fact, you might ask, what this kingdom of heaven actually is. I think it is the community of followers, or the community of saints on earth. It is Christ's church where His kingdom can be found. And I urge you to take this perspective of the church seriously. Yes, we are human and get reminded of it often, but the church is also God's presence in the world and one of the ways God moves to touch the lives of others. It is a place where the love of God abounds and His forgiveness is quite evident as we receive mercy and experience comfort from other saints.

And today we are blessed to remember our saints. We are blessed to receive all we need in life from a gracious God. These blessings that we do not deserve, nor can we earn, God freely bestows on all believers, all the saints. We should be grateful for such a free gift. We do fall short of the glory of God and sometimes wonder why God continues to love us. And we just need to simply open our hearts and accept this gift. We look toward the saints in our

lives that have reminded us and showed us the way to do just that. For we are all called by name to join God's Kingdom. So dear saints in the making, keep believing, keep witnessing, keep alive your faith until you receive that final call to join the great procession into heaven. **AMEN**