



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

The Gospel for this All Saints Day comes from the Sermon on the Plain that Jesus preached as recorded in Luke's Gospel. The Beatitudes from the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew's Gospel are a bit more familiar to us. Luke is a bit less spiritual and more provocative as he also includes a parallel series of woes to his four blessings.

Actually, from the get-go Matthew and Luke have a difference of opinion on even the setting. Matthew places Jesus on the side of a mountain as he recalls the sermon on the mount. In that setting Matthew says that Jesus is in this high remote setting where people come to hear his words of wisdom. In Luke, there is a mountain but it is where Jesus came down from after a time of prayer with the chosen 12 disciples, to meet and teach people on the plain. Luke is clear that Jesus comes to them, where they are.

Both Gospel writers record Jesus' Beatitudes. He declares those who are blessed. Yet the message of each Gospel writer is different, as different as mountains and prairies. Matthew evokes high and lofty images while Luke is much more down to earth and gritty. They both present very different models of blessedness and so we might be led to question which Gospel writer got it

right. Matthew or Luke? Which Gospel writer more accurately captures the setting and the sentiment of Jesus' most famous sermon?

Folks, if we try to answer that question, we will be sure to go down a rabbit hole that we cannot easily find our way out of. The two recountings of that sermon, are very different but that does not make one truer than the other. I think it is important to do justice to both by considering them in and of themselves. But we have not the time here today to accomplish such a task. So, I would like us today to think about the Lukean version as we are closing out the lectionary year of Luke. So, let's consider the poor and the hungry, the sad, and the despised for they are the ones that Jesus will bless in our Luke reading today. We will also look at the messages of woe, that Jesus includes to those that are rich, those who are satisfied, those who are laughing, and those who are highly regarded.

Our first set of blessing and woes deal with the poor and the rich. The poor will inherit the kingdom of God and woe to those rich who have already received their consolation. First of all, I do not think that being financially secure prevents someone from being a believer, being a good disciple of Christ. In the Message, a paraphrase by Eugene Pederson, the blessing for those that have lost it all is that God's kingdom is there for the finding. A thought here is that it might be easier to find and rely on God if you don't have lots of stuff around. True, those who come to God like beggars will be made wealthy by God's grace. And too often if we are complacent or satisfied, we can lose track of the gifts God has to offer.

Secondly, the blessing goes to those that are hungry and the woe to those who are satisfied with themselves. In the Message it says that the hungry will be ready for the Messianic meal. And the reverse or woe would be if you are centered on yourself, you will find that self cannot satisfy you eternally. Those that hunger will be filled with the peace that only comes through Christ alone.

The third set of blessings and woes are those who weep for they will laugh again, and the opposite is true of those who laugh now as they will mourn and weep. Many things in life, in this world, can make us weepy, but only God can make things right for us. And if we put on a happy face all the time, our sorrow and suffering will catch up with us eventually.

The final blessing and woe pair come regarding persecution. Those that suffer because of their belief in Christ will be applauded in heaven. But woe is the one who only lives for the approval of others and bows down to them. They

will find themselves living only in the real world and forgo the kingdom of God.

Well, these blessings and woes have much meaning for us and truly more can be said about each one, but I would like us to think about the command that Jesus tells the crowds next. “Love your enemies”. Folks, I don’t know about you, but this is probably the hardest thing we are asked to do. I have been really grappling with this for the last few weeks.

As many of you know, I am president of the Lord’s Cupboard food pantry in town. Last year we had a young woman, our treasurer steal money from our pantry bank account. She was very clever in how she did this and was only found out by an audit at Forward bank. Well after over a year, she now has just been found guilty of theft. On Dec 19<sup>th</sup> I will have to opportunity to stand in court before the judge and her to speak on behalf of the Lord’s Cupboard prior to her sentencing.

I have started writing down a few notes and then I tear them up and start over. I know God is asking me to forgive this woman and to love her, but a piece of me wants her to go to jail for a long, long time and throw away the key. She stole from our community a lot of money that we could have used to feed the hungry, which you all know is my passion. \$54,722.62 to be exact.

In the past 17 months, I have forgiven her but certainly not forgotten what she did and how she hurt me. But I am struggling to love her again. She was a close partner in our ministry, and she chose to do harm and ruin that relationship when she took money. I am praying hard that the right words will come to me at the court hearing and that the love I am supposed to have for her will somehow shine through. Love your enemies. That is a tough one.

And Jesus forges on to create what we now call the golden rule. “Do to others as you would have them do to you.” And the examples of how to do this are also found in the verses proceeding it. If someone gives you a hard time respond with prayer for that person. If they harm you, slap you on the face just take it. If someone steals your shirt, give them your best coat as well. If someone takes advantage of you practice the servant life. WOW. These are all not exactly how the real world works today, are they? But as Christians it is

not about payback but paying it forward. Life is abundant and we should live generously.

Think instead of how you like to be treated. Start the ball rolling toward that abundant life and do good to others. Not expecting anything in return but rather to build up the person so he or she can feel as good as you want too. This folks is what All Saints Day is all about. Remembering how those who have gone before us made us feel with their witness to the Gospel. Today we remember those who have lived in faith and died in faith, those who are in heaven with our Lord and Savior Jesus.

We remember those from our congregation, our own family members, and friends, not to be forgotten, but lifted up on this day. Remembered for their faith and witness while among us in our pilgrimage on earth. They have received their crown of righteousness and are in heaven cheering us on in our daily lives to continue to Love God and Love our neighbors as ourselves. Called to love our enemies and treat others as we would like to be treated is to continue in God's kingdom until the day, we are called home to join the saints in eternity. How blessed we will be to have our names written in heaven.

**AMEN**