

Festival of All Saints – Vicar Anderson sermon  
St. Matthew 5:1–12: “The Lord Blesses His Saints”  
November 6/7, 2021 | Saude, Jerico, & Redeemer Lutheran Churches

### In Nomine Iesu

+ + +

Gracious Father, You have transformed sinful creatures into Your saints by sending Your Son Jesus to earn salvation for us on the cross, we thank you for the powerful work of the Holy Spirit, in which You continue to bless Your saints with Word and Sacrament bringing to us this salvation. Amen

*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. (Rom. 1:7, etc.)*

---

*The sermon text for today is taken from the 5th chapter of the Gospel according to St. Matthew. We read selected verses in Jesus' name:*

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. <sup>4</sup>“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. <sup>5</sup>“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. <sup>6</sup>“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. <sup>11</sup>“Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

---

*These are Your words, heavenly Father. Sanctify us by Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen. (Joh. 17:17)*

In Christ Jesus, who has blessed you His Saints, by His all-powerful Word on behalf of all He has accomplished for you, dear fellow redeemed:

To our world a blessing is something you can see with your eyes or grasp in your hands. The world measures blessings by the amount of success or wealth someone has or the amount of popularity they have. People don't boast about their failures, instead professional athletes and prominent politicians only boast when things appear to be going well for them. To consider oneself blessed when that clearly doesn't appear to be the case would be foolishness to them.

On this All Saints Sunday it is fitting for us to hear what it actually means to be blessed. Today we remember the Lord's saints, all those in the faith who have gone before us to their heavenly home, all of us here on earth continuing in the good fight of faith and all those after us who will complete the race. Today we hear in what we often call the Beatitudes that the Lord's saints are blessed in a far different way than the world tends to think.

Jesus taught the people saying (Matt. 5:1–2), “blessed are the poor in spirit,” those who lack spiritual resources on their own and must depend on someone providing these resources for them. “Blessed are the mourning,” the ones saddened by their sins, dealing with the consequences of their own poor choices. “Blessed are the meek,” the gentle and submissive, those who are pushed around and imposed upon.

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst,” people searching because they recognize they lack what they need. “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.” This means that those who are blessed are people like you and me.

In the eyes of the world the Lord’s saints look anything but blessed. They think we are fools because we put our faith and trust in something we can’t see or grasp. This can impact our way of thinking and seep into how we as Christians look at our life. We are tempted to begin searching for evidence of blessings; if we can’t feel them then they must not be there.

We start to base the objective truth of our blessings from Christ upon our subjective emotions, which wax and wane day-by-day, or even moment-to-moment. We feel happy one moment and feel like the world is crumbling all around us the next. This only causes us to question God. Our troubles in life feel more like God’s abandonment than His love. We start to doubt whether or not God is good, because how could a good God allow such turmoil and trouble to inflict us?

Some Christians believe that blessings come only to those who earn them. They tell us, “good things are coming your way, work harder, keep God at the center of your life and things will be better,” believe stronger, think more positively and the Lord will bless you, you’ll see.” Well, what if things don’t improve, or what if they continue to get worse? That is why this is a false kind of gospel.

Christ never promises that we will have a comfortable earthly life if we follow him, in fact His Word tells us to expect the opposite. St. Peter writes, “beloved do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.” (1 Peter 4:12-14)

What if the happiness and goodness of life depended on our efforts or the strength of our faith? Imagine if forgiveness depended on our loyalty to God, or the proof of our faith was dependent on our obedience to God’s Law. What kind of a life would that look like for us? It would be one full of angst and regret, one of uncertainty and doubt, the definition of a truly un-blessed life!

Thankfully this is not how our merciful God wants us to live. Instead He wants us to look outside ourselves to our Savior on the cross of Calvary for the certainty of our happiness and goodness in life. To see that Jesus was tempted in every way like us but did not sin; He suffered grief and insult in His life yet remained silent. We share in His sufferings and He in ours. Even more God abandoned His own Son on the cross, suffering the eternal agony of hell, so that you and I would never have to.

Jesus’ perfect life and His atoning death are the source of your blessed life. He does not meet you halfway, instead Jesus went the whole way. He lived with perfect and complete obedience to God’s Law in your place, always faithful to God the Father. Your Lord does not say, “if you do this, I will do this,” His grace is not conditional, it is a promise already kept for you.

The Lord has created His saints by declaring you forgiven of all your sins. He forgives the moments you doubt His goodness and the times you are convinced He has abandoned you. He forgives selfishness in the times of your success, when you give Him no honor for His help and guidance. He forgives the times you get stuck staring at yourself instead of looking to Him.

In order for us to look to Christ it first requires us to despair of ourselves and recognize how powerless we are against sin and the devil. We must in repentance acknowledge that we are helpless and lack the ability on our own to resist sin. The Lord's saints hate their sin because it stands in the way of enjoying all the blessings He has given them.

We look to Christ who did what God required of all of us, but what we were unable to do (Romans 8:3-4). Christ is not another lawgiver; the Beatitudes are not a new law. Jesus tells us He came to fulfill the Law by His life and death—not to abolish it or add to it (Matt 5:17). Jesus is the one who has cleansed us from all guilt and shame and God blesses you on account of that fact, not on account of anything you do.

We His saints still struggle with sinful thoughts and sinful actions and want to do better but we can't do it on our own. St. Paul knew this well, he writes, "For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing" (Romans 7:18-19).

Jesus did not abandon St. Paul and He does not abandon you. He has provided the means to continuously uplift and sustain you. God brought you to faith and now He continues to shower grace upon you through His Word and Sacrament. The Lord forgives us our sin, strengthens us and keeps us in His embrace. We kneel at the rail communing with all the saints in heaven and on earth where He distributes forgiveness to us in the Lord's Supper, freely giving us eternal salvation and a renewal of life.

Jesus opens His mouth and the Word that comes out from it effects change. The same Word of Christ that made water into wine makes the poor in spirit rich in spirit. You are no longer spiritually poor; He has supplied everything for you. The same powerful Word of Christ that raises the dead to life turns sinners into saints and the unblessed into the blessed. It has the power to quicken those spiritually dead to a new life in Christ. This new life starts here but continues on for you in heaven.

Jesus tells you, "great is your reward in heaven" (Matthew 5:12). There He gives you a reward of immortality and infinite wealth. He has reserved a place for you where there are many mansions (John 14:2). Even greater than all of this, after your resurrection from the grave you will dwell both body and soul in the glory of your Savior, in His fullness and without end. "Rejoice and be glad" (Matthew 5:12), because all of this has been given to you.

The Lord has blessed you by His resurrection. His resurrection is proof that God the Father has accepted the sacrifice on the cross. It is a declaration of righteousness and forgiveness over all people. God declares you righteous on account of His Son's life and death, which overpowers death and hell for you. His resurrection means that God no longer sees you as a sinner, but as a saint.

God's wrath is not directed at you; instead His loving face shines upon you. You hear these words of the Lord spoken over you every time the benediction occurs in church. "The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious unto you, the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace." (Numbers 6:24-27).

God's face is like the warmth of the sun upon you. It sends beams of sunshine into a heart in need of salvation, making it a recipient of His grace. Jesus teaches in the Beatitudes that because of God's grace you are blessed no matter what circumstance you find yourself in. Jesus gave Himself for you so that a rich supply of goodness would pour down to you from God's good favor.

The Lord never ceases to speak His Word, in order that you who are called His own might gladly hear and forever hold firmly to it. When your time comes you will join the host of saints in heaven, arrayed in white, who rest from their labors in everlasting blessedness.

*Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, forevermore. Amen.*

+ + +