

BLESSED ARE YOU!

All Saints Day – 11/01/20 – Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: Matthew 5:1-12 Pastor Keith Besel

v. 11a, 12a – **“Blessed are you... Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven...”**.

Introduction

✘ We just sang this in the 4th stanza of our Sermon Hymn, comparing our current reality to that of the believers who are now with Jesus in paradise, *“We feebly struggle, they in glory shine”* (LSB 677:4).

→ Don't you envy those saints who've gone before us; who are gloriously with the angels and archangels and all the company of heaven? In John's glorious vision in our First Reading from Revelation, chapter 7, believers from every nation, clothed in white robes washed in the blood of the Lamb, are crying out, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” (v.10)

→ These are the saints who feebly struggle no more; they hunger and thirst no more. They have no more tears; no more pain; no more sin. They will never again experience death. And so we long to be with these saints in Paradise. We consider them so blessed; so fortunate; so joyous; so righteous and pure; so forgiven and cleansed; so satisfied and so crowned with the gift of eternal life!

✘ But for you, as a baptized child of God in Jesus, right now, as you feebly struggle on this earth, dear Christian, Jesus says in our Gospel Reading, *“Blessed are you!”*

I. To be “Blessed”

✘ Before we take a brief look at each of the Beatitudes, which is the Latin word for “Blessedness”, I think it's important that we understand what the original Greek Word that Jesus used here in this text is really getting at.

→ Nine times uses the Greek word “makarios” (μακάριος), which is most often translated as “blesséd”.

→ The most common way that people understand this term is to describe a person's feelings of being very happy or content. But this word and the way Jesus uses it here has very little to do with feelings. It's NOT about me saying something like, “I feel blessed today because I am no longer sick with the Covid virus. No, instead this term describes more the current reality of my situation, regardless of how I feel, because I am a privileged recipient of God's favor.

For example, Mary Beth and I recently looked at each other and said, “We are so blessed because God worked to save us and bring us through the Covid virus to a full recovery”.

→ Do you see the difference? One way is all focused on me and my feelings, while the other is first and foremost about God and His saving work in Christ for us!

✘ This reality of us having received God's salvation and grace in Jesus already today, is the emphasis and focus here when Jesus says, “Blessed are...” in the Beatitudes.

→ And the grammatical construction in each case is a present tense, meaning this is your reality right now today through faith in Jesus!

✘ Now let's look at each Beatitude briefly, and then apply it to this special day – All Saints Day.

II. Blessed are the poor in spirit... (v. 3)

- ⊗ Verse three, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”. Yes, that is every one of us in our original sinful state. By nature, your soul and mine is bankrupt of any good at all. We are “poor miserable sinners” (LSB, pg. 184) to the core.
 - We may think that the material things we have in this life make us rich. But we cheat in our business transactions. We compare ourselves to the riches of our neighbor all the time. We feverishly work to build up our assets – thinking that all these things define us as something good or valuable.
 - But we can have all the riches and talents in the world and still be so poor, for without Christ and His saving work we are still bankrupt. In sin none of us “deserves” heaven and none of us can earn it.
- ⊗ Yet Jesus says here “Blessed are the poor in spirit...” because He, Jesus has come. And on the cross He has taken your bankrupt soul into His own flesh and now those who are in Christ, by His grace through faith – theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
 - Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 8:9, “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you by His poverty might become rich”. Now your spirit is wealthy. Now you are rich with Christ. Now He fills your soul so that the kingdom of heaven is yours indeed.

III. Blessed are those who mourn... (v. 4).

- ⊗ The next Beatitude in verse four says, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."
 - Martin Luther describes Christians on earth, saying that we are *simul justus et peccator* – “at the same time saint and sinner”. Yes, we are 100% sinful and unclean; yet in Christ, through the waters of Holy Baptism, we are 100% percent righteous and holy at the same time.
 - When the effects of this broken and fallen world hit us, we mourn. We mourn the death of a family member or friend; the loss of our home in a hurricane, flood or wildfire; the destruction of our crops in a drought; the cruelty of violence and rape and persecution as Christians.
 - But we also mourn because of our own sins. We may be 100% saints in Christ, but we still act like 100% sinners every day. We destroy relationships; we worship our own idols; we are so guilt-ridden over the sins of our youth and our daily actions and attitudes. And so we mourn.
 - In Romans 7:18-19 Paul describes it this way, “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.”
- ⊗ But Jesus says to you and me, “Blessed are those who mourn...” because He entered our death in order to give you and me eternal life and resurrection.
 - Even as we struggle on this earth we rejoice in the resurrection of Jesus who raises us up and comforts us with these words: “In Me your sins are forgiven!” “You are mine through the waters of your Baptism”.

IV. Blessed are the meek... (v. 5).

- ⊗ Verse five, “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth”. To be “meek” is to be “humble”; not focused upon self; not proudly placing myself over others in value or worth or importance.

→ After Mary learned that the Son of God had been conceived in her womb she sang, “[God] has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts” (Lk. 1:51). That is a confession for every one of us, for we are an arrogant people, so full of ourselves, thinking that the world revolves around us; that everyone must think like, and agree with us in all things.

→ For example – most people actually think that they deserve the inheritance of their parents? They vainly believe they are entitled to what is not theirs. Psalm 89:11 corrects that false thinking, saying of the LORD, “The heavens are Yours; the earth also is Yours; the world and all that is in it”. You see, we never deserve to inherit the earth or anything in it. As sinners what we actually deserve is hell!

✘ Yet Jesus says, “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth”. Why? Again, because Jesus takes your sinful pride into His own flesh and in exchange He gives you His pure humility.

→ Philippians 2:8 tells us, “Being found in human form, [Jesus] humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross”. So, you want to see true meekness? Then feast your eyes on the cross of Jesus where He paid for your conceit and attitude of entitlement and raised you up; giving you His meekness. Now in humility John tells us of our true Christian inheritance in Revelation 21:1, “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth”.

V. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness... (v. 6).

✘ Verse six, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness...”. Remember Jesus is teaching His disciples what it means to be His in the Kingdom of God. But are they really hungering and thirsting to be made right with God at this time?

→ Well, think of what we know of these men. One hungers for money as a tax collector. Another hungers for money and eventually sells Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. Another hungers for justice as a militant extremist. Another doubts and hungers for proof. Another hungers for self-glory and thinks he doesn’t need Jesus to wash him.

→ Now friends, for what do you hunger? Too often we hunger and thirst for evil, lust, greed and fame. And we are satisfied most when we have someone to hate. This separates us from God.

✘ Nevertheless Jesus says, “Blessed are you” when you “hunger and thirst for righteousness...”. The very reason Jesus was nailed to the cross was His thirst and hunger for our righteousness; taking our unrighteousness and giving us His own; making us sinners right with the Father through His blood.

→ The water and blood that spilled from Jesus’ side point us to see the soul-satisfying gifts He gives us today; where baptismal water refreshes us with faith and eternal life; where His body and blood in Communion quench our souls with Christ’s forgiveness, and strengthens our body and spirit more than anything else!

VI. Blessed are you who are merciful, for you shall receive mercy (v 7).

✘ Now on to verse seven, “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy”. Do you see a pattern here? We are not naturally merciful. Instead, by nature, we are cruel and self-serving.

→ Seriously, how merciful are you toward those in your community who are in need? How about the unborn, the frail, the widow, the orphan, the sick, the hungry, the depressed, the sad, the lonely, the handicapped?

→ Too often the only one to whom we really show mercy is ourselves. Yet God, in His Son, has shown us the one thing we do NOT deserve – mercy in the extreme! Hebrews 2:17 tells us that

Jesus became one of us so that He might be a “merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people”. In His mercy for us we are now saved.

VII. Blessed are the pure in heart... (v. 8).

✘ Next we have the sixth Beatitude in verse 8, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God”. With great anguish in our hearts, the devil tempts us to question and ask, “Where is God?” Even as we say we believe and trust in God, the troubles of this world; the pains and pressures we face every day place a blinder before us so that we do not see God and His work in and for us even though He is out in plain sight.

➔ Jesus reveals the true nature of our hearts in Matthew 15:19 saying, “For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander”.

✘ Yet again, Jesus has washed us clean in our baptism – all the way to the core. He has created in you a clean heart and renewed a right spirit within you (Ps. 51:10). Now the blinder is down and the Spirit has given to us the eyes of faith. Now we see God everywhere – working and protecting us in the midst of trouble and pain; teaching and guiding us in His Word; feeding us in His meal of forgiveness.

VIII. Blessed are the peacemakers... (v. 9).

✘ Verse nine, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God”. Are we sure Jesus got this one right? Is He calling us; the kings and queens of conflict, “peacemakers”? You say something I don’t like, or disagree with today and that’s it – the battle is on! Just look at how contentious things are leading up to this Tuesday’s election. Each side has lost not only the ability, but even the desire to sit down and talk about differences in mutual respect. And it is not only “those people” folks. You and I are every bit a part of the problem too – even within Christ’s Church!

➔ Still Jesus is right when He says that we are now “blessed” by Him to be called “peacemakers”. That’s why He came; why He died and rose from death – to give you peace. Now through the victory of Jesus you are at peace with God. As John says in today’s Epistle Reading, “See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are” (1 Jn. 3:1). That is a fact that describes us today and cannot be undone except through unbelief.

IX. Blessed are those persecuted for righteousness’ sake... (vv. 10–12).

✘ And now the last Beatitude in verses 10-12, “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” As Jesus brings His new disciples to Himself – both at the time of our text and still today, He tells them that there will be a price; they will be persecuted, falsely accused and spoken against in all kinds of evil ways simply because they believe and confess their total trust in Jesus!

➔ If you expect this sinful world to treat you well when they find out you are a Christian, my dear saints, you are fooling yourselves. And if you are not running into trouble or being reviled because of your faith, you might want to evaluate whether or not you are letting the Gospel light of Christ shine in your life.

➔ Too often, in fear we hide our faith from others; we say we’re doing it because we don’t want to offend them. But to hide Christ from the world is to offend Christ Himself.

✘ Jesus said in John 16:33, “In the world you will have tribulation”. Right there He said that it is just a fact of following Jesus. But He continues, “take heart; I have overcome the world”.

→ This world and its troubles are not the final deal. That is not where we hang our hats folks. Jesus has something far greater for us all – “[ours] is the kingdom of heaven!” Notice again the present tense. When our heart, mind and soul belongs to Jesus – even NOW we are a part of the kingdom of heaven! Our place there is secure because it does not depend upon us, but Jesus alone and His saving work on our behalf.

Conclusion

✘ As we sang before “We feebly struggle, they (that is the saints already with Jesus in Paradise); they in glory shine” (*LSB* 677:4). They are the ones whom John said in our First Reading are (present tense) “clothed in white robes”; “washed...in the blood of the Lamb”. “Before the throne of God” with no more hunger or thirst or tears in their eyes. Drinking freely from the “springs of living water” (Rev. 7:13-17).

→ The hymn continues by saying, “Yet all are one in Thee, for all are Thine. Alleluia!” (*LSB* 677:4). Dear Christians, the glory of those beloved saints in heaven will one day be your glory and mine! Why? Because as Jesus has declared it, “Blesséd are you!” (v. 11). He has made you His beloved saints right now by His grace. You are blessed indeed. Amen.