

All Saints' Day, November 2, 2014

## Blessed Are You!

Matthew 5:1-12



Dear Friends in Christ, grace and peace from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Don't you envy the saints who've gone before us, who are gloriously with the angels and archangels and all the company of heaven? As the first reading so gloriously describes the vision of Heaven and what the saints are doing, saints 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!"

These are the saints who struggle no more; they hunger and thirst no more. They have no more tears; they have no more pain; they have no more sin. They will never again experience death, and on the last day they will resurrect from the dead and take their own resurrected bodies, but until then we long and yearn to be with these saints in heaven. 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! For "they in glory shine" (LSB 677:4) and their labours ended!

They are done! But we aren't yet! So on this All Saints Day as we give thanks to God for the Saints already in Heaven, we need to pray for and encourage the Saints who are still on this side of eternity, you and me the baptized children of God in Christ Jesus, the pilgrims on this earth, who feebly struggle on their way. As you know, it is not easy being a Christian in this time and age, or at any time for that matter.

But take courage, Jesus says that you are blessed! That's the message of our Gospel today, where He assures that you are blessed! Yes, You Are Blessed! Jesus assured His disciples then, and you and me today that Yes! you are blessed!

But do you know what the word blessed means? The original word used here is the word "makarios" which is a word that describes the state of a person when he or she receives God's benefits, the benefits he extends. It describes a believer in enviable ("fortunate") position from receiving God's provisions (favor) – which (literally) extend ("make long, large") His grace – that is His benefits.

Now are we blessed or are we blessed! Oh, we are blessed indeed! Hear what Jesus says once again,

**I. Blessed are you who are poor in spirit, for yours is the kingdom of heaven (v. 3).**

Imagine what Jesus says: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." V3. Actually don't just imagine but trust it, hold on to it.

Once you were poor in Spirit and now you are rich! Yours is the Kingdom of God! If you are in Christ your spirit is wealthy. You are rich with Christ, and as Christ has filled your soul, now the kingdom of heaven is yours indeed.

**II. Blessed are you who mourn, for you will be comforted (v 4).**

Next, verse 4 tells us: "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."

God is good with us, isn't He. Jesus says: those who mourn are blessed. Dear friends, today we will remember those who are already in heaven, and I'm sure some of you are also mourning already those who are about to be there. To you Jesus says you are blessed. You are blessed because Jesus Christ has entered the death of your loved ones and yours as well, in order to give them and you eternal life and resurrection.

He also comforts you when you mourn for other things like your sins, or the things that are in the world that cause grief.

### **III. Blessed are you who are meek, for you shall inherit the earth (v 5).**

Then, in verse 5 we are told: "Blessed are you who are meek, for you shall inherit the earth" (v 5). Even when we weren't meek and only our sinful pride was driving our lives, Jesus puts on and lets us partake in his humility that even when He was God He came to die in our place as the apostle Paul says: "And being found in human form, [Jesus] humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Phil 2:8).

### **IV. Blessed are you who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for you will be satisfied (v 6).**

Then Jesus continues: "Blessed are you who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for you will be satisfied (v 6).

We have tried everything, haven't we? Lust, greed, fame, hate, material possessions but nothing filled our hunger; nothing quenched our thirst, but Jesus Christ. We are blessed indeed for He is the one who fills us up, He is the one who satisfies us, He was the one who was hungry and thirsting as He hung on that cross for each one of us.

### **V. Blessed are you who are merciful, for you shall receive mercy (v 7).**

But the blessings don't end just yet, for Jesus says: "Blessed are you who are merciful, for you shall receive mercy (v 7).

We were not naturally merciful; by nature, we are cruel and self-serving. Look at your neighbor in need: the unborn, the infirm, the widow, the orphan, the sick, the hungry, the depressed, the sad, the lonely, the handicapped—and how merciful were we with them? But as the writer of Hebrews says, "Therefore he [Jesus] had to be made like his brothers in every respect [becoming man], so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation [amends] for the sins of the people" (Heb 2:17). He showed mercy to us first, He showered mercies upon mercies so that we can be merciful to one another.

### **VI. Blessed are you who are pure in heart, for you will see God (v 8).**

Jesus says, "Blessed are you who are pure in heart, for you will see God" (v 8). Our hearts were not pure, were they? No, not really, listen to what Jesus said in Matthew 15:19: "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander." How many of us were exactly there? Yet Jesus says blessed are you, for God has created in you a clean heart and renewed a right spirit within you.

Jesus says to us, "I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Mt 11:29). On Good Friday, the gentle heart of Jesus was stopped. On that day, the sins that pour out of your heart were forgiven. Now from your heart comes forth the befriending of your neighbor, leading a sexually pure and decent life, and explaining everything in the kindest way.

You see God in his Word, in His meal, in the font—for in all these He cleans the heart—and the world now sees the heart of God through your purified heart.

**VII. Blessed are you who are peacemakers, for you will be called sons of God (v 9).**

Jesus adds: “Blessed are you who are peacemakers, for you will be called sons of God (v 9). Now, does Jesus know who He’s talking to—calling us peacemakers?! Because more often than not, we created conflicts! We certainly didn’t want to admit when we’re wrong. We were great at accusing others of their wrongdoings; we’d rather say something bad about someone on Face-book than meet face-to-face and risk trying to reconcile.

We didn’t make peace; we made trouble—at homes, at school, church, family reunions, business meetings, and just about wherever we were. Therefore as Paul said: “You were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked . . . following the prince of the power of the air [the devil]” (Eph 2:1–2). Our war mongering and relationship-wrecking made us sons of Satan, not sons of God. Yet blessed says Jesus because Christ has come to give you peace. You are at peace with God through the victory of Jesus Christ on the cross. Satan has been crushed, and your death has been defeated, you are at peace!

**VIII. Blessed are you who are persecuted and reviled and spoken against, for yours is the joy and the kingdom of heaven (vs. 10–12).**

And lastly Jesus says: “Blessed are you who are persecuted and reviled and spoken against, for yours is the joy and the kingdom of heaven.” (vv 10–12).

Jesus knew that being His disciples wasn’t going to be easy. He knew that this sinful and fallen world will not treat you well. You will feebly struggle, even as you suffer the anger and hatred of this fallen world.

Satan’s leash is lengthened, sin runs rampant, the Last Day is growing closer. Christians throughout the world are being reviled, beaten, persecuted, imprisoned, taxed, ridiculed, and killed. Could this persecution be at our back door? It is very likely. Still, Jesus says: Blessed are you, as St. Peter reminds you: “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you. . . . But rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed” (1 Pet 4:12–13).

**IX. All Wonderful But...**

We are blessed indeed! But... But many times we don’t feel like it. We are blessed and as we are blessed we are to bless others as well with the same blessings Jesus blesses us with. We are to be merciful to others, but we are not, are we, we care only about ourselves that we are fed, that we have a nice house, that we have money, but that’s all. We are supposed to be at peace with others but we are not, are we? Many times we are not even at peace with ourselves let alone with others. We still create conflicts; we don’t want to admit when we’re wrong. We are still great at accusing others of their wrongdoings; we’d rather say something bad about someone on Face-book than meet face-to-face and risk trying to reconcile.

We didn’t make peace; we make trouble—at homes, at school, church, family reunions, business meetings, and so on....

We still feel poor in spirit, that’s why we go after things of the world. Finding hope in material things and when we don’t have what we want the nature of our poverty

gets exposed, for example, we cheat in our business transactions, or we compare ourselves to the riches of our neighbor and want always to overdue them.

We are supposed to mourn not only for our departed loved ones, but for our sins as well, but we don't. Instead we rejoice in them, we laugh at them. Yes, as we are on this side of eternity we remain sinners but saints at the same time. That is, we are 100 percent sinful and unclean, and yet in Christ, through the waters of Holy Baptism, we are 100 percent righteous and holy. But somehow we do remain just sinners and throw away Christ's work for us in the forgiveness of our sins.

We are supposed to be meek, for Jesus has blessed us with His meekness, but what do we do? We are still arrogant people, full of ourselves, thinking the world revolves around us, and we deserve everything we want.

We are supposed to be satisfied with Jesus' righteousness, but we are not. Instead we have an appetite for lust; we feed ourselves with greed; we gorge ourselves with fame; we satisfy ourselves with hate.

Friends, if we feel that we are not blessed as Jesus says we are, then, today is the day to repent, to mourn our sins, and to come to Him in words of repentance. After all what keeps us away from those blessings is unrepentance. What keeps us from being truly merciful and at peace with others is the lack of mourning for our sins, is repentance and confession of those same sins. Only when we confess our sins and receive God's forgiveness those blessings will be granted, and would not be for a moment only but you will be blessed beyond understanding and sufficiently that you will be able to share with others.

Yes this side of eternity is still difficult to traverse, that's why we are happy with those who are in God's glory now. Yes "We feebly struggle, they in glory shine" (LSB 677:4). But one day the glory of the saints in heaven will be your glory as well. Young or old, I want to entrust you with this truth that although we struggle, and we struggle because of our own sins and the sins of others, Christ is your blessing. Christ assures us with the reality that we will live with Him forever because of what He has done. That as He brings you to be with Him, you are not walking alone, but He is with you, always! And His presence with you is not so much a bodyguard presence, you know somebody who watches and protects you, but that He is your life, He is your blessings, your everyday blessing that enables you to rejoice, be confident, be faithful and be a blessing to others as well.

Blessed are you because, dear saints in Christ through the blood, suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, this glory is yours even now, yet more fully to be realized on the Last Day, which will be yours for a day that has no end.

Conclusion: Dear saints, I know you feebly struggle in this broken and fallen world of sin and death. Through Christ's death and resurrection, God gives you His kingdom, His comfort, His mercy, and He claims you for His very own right now! All these gifts of God can be summarized in these three words: Blessed are you! Yes, you are blessed! You are in an enviable position because you have received God's provisions – which literally extends His grace.

Amen.