

All Saints' Day Observed
3 November 2024
Matthew 5:1-12 (Revelation 7:2-17; 1 John 3:1-3)

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ—Amen.

The text for this morning's sermon is the Holy Gospel appointed for All Saints' Day from the Holy Gospel According to St. Matthew, the fifth chapter.

In the Name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit—Amen

The Beatitudes are our Lord, Christ's description of what it is to be His disciple. They are not demands. They are not prescriptions. They are descriptions. They describe the life of a disciple of Jesus. And they describe the life of a disciple of Jesus because first and foremost, they describe Jesus.

Blessed is Christ, Our Lord who became poor in spirit for us in order to earn the Kingdom of heaven for us. He mourned on the way to Jerusalem for those whom He loved but who hated Him. He is now comforted at the Father's right hand. He became meek and had no place to lay His head, but now He inherits all the earth and the sons of Adam and daughters of Abraham who confess and praise His Name. He hungered and thirsted for righteousness crying out even from the cross itself. Now, He is satisfied in His vindication. He has obtained righteousness for His children.

He is the Merciful One for whom there was no mercy. Now, He reigns by and for the mercy which endures forever. He is pure in heart and sees His Father with unflinching eye and reveals Him to us. He is the Peacemaker, the Son of God, who restores peace between heaven and earth, who institutes the washing of peace and the Feast of peace. He is, above all, the One who was reviled and persecuted, against whom they said all sorts of evil precisely because He is

Yahweh the Savior come to earth for this pain. He is the greatest of the prophets whom the prophets foreshadowed. He is the first of the Martyrs who find their strength in Him. He is the Apostle of apostles who was sent and who sends.

We see Him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, who is the great subject of the Beatitudes, namely Jesus, now crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone. It was fitting that He, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why He is not ashamed to call us brothers.

As His brothers, sanctified by His sorrows, justified by His resurrection, the beatitudes also show our glory. We too are blessed. In and by Him we exist. We traverse with Him the lonely way and are not alone. He is with us. So also, there is a great cloud around us—a great cloud of witnesses. Those who have preceded us in the faith and come to the culmination of Holy Baptism, whose sanctification now matches their justification, are with us, witnesses of Christ and witnesses of what we shall be.

As we observe All Saints Day, we hear the vision seen in Patmos and we know that what is sown is perishable but what is raised is imperishable, that what is sown in dishonor is raised in glory. We now bear the image of the man of dust. But like the saints before us, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.

Whether we live to the second coming of Christ or whether we are sooner translated to glory, we shall never be forgotten or left alone. Those who are baptized into Christ and trust in Him do not die. They live. Those who are baptized into Him and trust in Him own, possess, and live in the Kingdom of heaven. They shall be comforted. They shall inherit the earth. They shall

be satisfied in the quest for righteousness and mercy, for seeing God and being called the sons of God. But already now, theirs, that is to say, yours, is the Kingdom of heaven.

Until then, we are weak in spirit. We mourn, are meek, are hungry to be free of sin. We are frustrated in our lack of mercy, our impurity of heart, and our stubborn, quarrelsome ways. We do not live up to the Kingdom which is bestowed by grace. We do not live up to the King whose throne was covered in blood, but the Kingdom is ours. We are redeemed by Substitution. Our King reigns not by violence but by suffering violence. He rules in us not by force but by forgiveness.

We are God's children now and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when Christ appears in glory on the last day that we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who thus hopes in Christ purifies himself as Christ is pure.

Then we shall all be changed. All shall be changed, those who suffered physical death and those who escape it and must endure the terror of the end, the Church Triumphant and the Church Militant together, the Church of Jesus Christ, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet, we shall all be changed. We, our dead loved ones, the saints of old, all will be perfected. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable. And we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:

“Death is swallowed up in victory.”
“O death, where is your victory?
O death, where is your sting?”

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Then we shall be changed. Then we shall be comforted. Then we shall be satisfied. Now we mourn. Now we suffer and endure. But already now, as then, the kingdom is ours, and the cloud of witnesses is around us, and we are not alone. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed. We are always bearing about in our bodies and our lives the dying of the Lord Jesus. We bear this so that His Life might also be made manifest in our bodies and our lives. May God always deliver us in this life to death for Jesus' sake so that we might be raised in His resurrection and that the Kingdom would be ours. Thus it was with the saints before us. Thus it is with us. The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away. Blessed be the Name of the Lord.

As we observe All Saints Day, we give thanks for our Lord's work and mercy in those who have gone before us. And also, as we observe All Saints Day, rejoice that you are already numbered among the saints because you are forgiven for all your sins.

In the Name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit—Amen

The peace of God that passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus—
Amen

Sermon based on one by the Rev. David Petersen