

November 1, 2020
All Saints Sunday
Revelation 7:(2-8) 9-17, 1 John 3:1-3, Matthew 5:1-12
"You are truly blessed"

Today we listen to our Lord Jesus speak to us in this famous Sermon on the Mount. He gathers his disciples around him, sits down and then teaches them how blessed they were even when they faced major challenges in their lives.

This morning I want you to think about some of the tough challenges that face you in your life. Instead of being negative, and woe is me, I want to tell you, not how lucky you are but how truly blessed you are.

If you are poor in spirit you are blessed. In fact, you are doubly blessed because no matter how poor in spirit you may be, the kingdom of heaven is yours. "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

That's right, just think of how blessed you are because you are so poor in spirit that you believe there is nothing you have inside yourself to offer God to make him love you and accept you.

With David you confess your poverty before your God, "For I know my transgressions and my sin is always before me." You see nothing in yourself, BUT you see everything in Jesus. "Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling."

That makes you very blessed because even though you see nothing in yourself worthy of God's love, everything is yours in the kingdom of God. You have Jesus as your King, who rescued you and made you apart of His kingdom of love and that never changes and it lasts forever.

With Paul we joyfully proclaim, "For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves," and now the second beatitude that Jesus speaks says, "Blessed are you who mourn, for they will be comforted."

In my ministry I have seen a whole lot of mourning amongst Christians. I have witnessed the sudden death of young people in some of the poorest sections in our society. I have witnessed the utter pain and sorrow, when a couple divorces, and I have watched people that I love and care for slowly be eaten away by cancer.

Also as I get older I mourn and regret a lot of the dumb and stupid things I have done wrong in my life. I weep as I look at my own sins, and what they have brought about, as well as what sin's sin's presence has done in this world.

But Jesus comes to us today and puts a smile on our faces. Jesus says, "I have good news for anyone crying over sin....you can find comfort, and forgiveness, and true soul consolation in my kingdom, and that is a blessing.

If you're fighting back tears of sorrow over a loss or physical pain or emotional distress or loneliness or alienation or rejection, I just want to say again as tenderly as I can, `I have good news for you today: you're gonna find comfort and soul consolation in my kingdom, so ..."mourners....come on in, the kingdom doors are wide open to you and that is a blessing."

On this "All Saints Sunday" when we remember those who have gone on before us, We remember the comforting words of Jesus when He says, "I will wipe every tear from your eyes. I will provide you with comfort and strength in every tribulation, and finally eternal life in Heaven and that is a blessing."

There's a metaphor in Psalm 56:8 of God having a bottle with your name on it and with my name on it....Every tear that we've ever shed has been gently collected and put in that bottle where God can see it....and be involved with it and sort of be in that suffering moment with us.

He treasures our tears and knows....how difficult they are. And he says, "I would never just let any of your tears fall to the ground and evaporate into dirt....because I know how soul-wrenching sorrow can be so I collect every tear; I put it in a bottle; i'm there with you--in it and through it with you.

it's like God is like a tear collector. He know us so well and He is there with us in every possible way and that is a blessing, so my friends, Don't Worry, be happy! You will be comforted.

Our next beatitude says, "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth." It means that a Christian who loves Jesus is to be meek. Now meek doesn't mean being a whimp. Meek means to be a gentle-spirited.

People who don't push and shove to get to the front of lines. People who don't step on other people to get to the top at work. People who don't try to take twelve items through a ten-item express lane at the supermarket.

A meek Christian endures mistreatment without retaliating. Like Jesus, they are willing to leave the matter of vengeance in God's hands. They turn the other cheek and they go the extra mile. And guess what, the result will be that we will inherit the earth.

It is for our sake-the meek- that the earth will be preserved and not destroyed. It is for our benefit - the meek - that God directs the affairs of men and nations. God makes sure that all things work together for the good of us -the meek-while we are here.

And one day, we will inherit a new heaven and new earth and that will be our blessing. Not the proud, not the pushy, not the self-serving, egotistical narcissistic and greedy but the meek, the gentle spirited God loving, Christ-serving children of God.

Jesus says that we will be blessed because the Lord our God will put into our lives a deep hunger and thirst for righteousness. So often you and I eat the wrong things in this world. We eat food not because we are hungry, but just because it is something to do, to calm our nerves but Jesus is not talking about physical hunger here, but rather spiritual hunger. He wants his children to hunger after righteousness, to do the right thing, to seek the higher good.

It's true that not a day goes by when we are not aware of how inadequate our righteousness is, but then we think of Jesus and His righteousness that has been credited to our account and makes us loved by our God.

We say with Isaiah, "I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with the garments salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness."

Blessed are these hungry Christians because they are concerned about being righteous, righteous through faith in Jesus. Further, these hungry Christians are concerned about living righteous and God-pleasing lives.

They are eager to satisfy their spiritual hunger and thirst. They know the Lord Jesus Christ as the Bread of Life, and they drink deeply of the living water that He provides.

In other words, they strive to make faithful use of the means of grace, the Gospel of Christ in Word and Sacraments. They strive to make the Word of God a part of their daily routine and they love to assemble regularly with fellow believers to hear God's Word proclaimed. For them, this is their blessing.

People cried out to Jesus for mercy because they knew he cared about people. Think of how blessed you are, because Jesus has had mercy on you. He puts into your heart and thoughts and life, the feelings of mercy and compassion for other people.

So that you care about people. So that you worry about whether or not they will spend eternity with you in heaven. So that you pray for people going through problems because your life is filled with mercy for people.

And because you are a Christian, you want to be like Jesus. You are so blessed to have these feelings of mercy. You are so blessed to know the mercy of God that has been shown to you.

Every day we can say with Peter, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." We are blessed because our God has shown his mercy to you and now we can show mercy to others.

Jesus say we are so blessed because we are pure in heart. We already know that our hearts are not pure by itself. We can read the words of the prophet Jeremiah that say, "My heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand?"

We can also hear the Psalmist ask the haunting question, "Who may ascend hill of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place?" and the answer comes back, "He who has clean hands and a pure heart."

So look at your hands. Are they clean? Look at your heart. By itself it is not clean, but with Jesus it is. Jesus said in John 15 "You are clean through the word I have spoken to you."

It was David who prayed in Psalm 51, "Create in me a clean heart O God." You are so blessed and so am I because our God was working on your heart and my heart to make it clean and pure.

We are so blessed because of what Jesus has done for us, we will see God. Someday we will see God face to face in his glory and we will be pure and enjoy living with people who are pure.

My friends, we are so blessed because we get to live our lives on this earth as peace makers. "Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called sons of God."

As Christians, we actively strive to make peace where there is enmity or hostility. We offer our services as mediators between warring nations or quarreling relatives, or hostile neighbors. We strive to live in peace with everyone.

But that doesn't mean that we will not stand up for the truth of God's Word, if circumstances warrant it. Although peace is desirable, peace at any price is not acceptable.

We know the peace we have with God through Jesus Christ. We want to offer that peace to all people. Remember who we are, Children of God. Don't worry, be happy.

Jesus finishes up his 8 marks of a Christian with these words, Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of God."

We should always expect to suffer at times, for saying and doing what is right. That is what happened to Jesus, so you and I must not expect any better treatment.

But remember too, there will be an additional reward of grace to the Christian that stands for the truth of God's Word. It will be in addition to the salvation that is theirs by Christ's merits alone. These rewards will be pleasant surprises to all who receive them.

These are blessings that God gives to us, no matter what the circumstance might be. Through good times and hard times, God is always with us, Jesus never leaves us and the hope of the Gospel message always comforts us, and because of all that, we are truly blessed, in Jesus' name. Amen.