

Sermon for the Feast of All Saints – Matthew 5:1-12

In the Name of the Father and of the Son ✠ and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

When our Lord preached, people followed. He saved souls. He healed bodies. People clung to Him. And He sees them with the eye of pity, because they were wondering sheep, not having a shepherd.

So He sat down. Christ humbled Himself. He sat down so that even the tax collectors and sinners, He sat down so that even Mary Magdalene, He sat down so that even the thief on the cross, He sat down so that you and I sinners might come to Him. He of whom the holy angels could scarcely approach comes to us to sit down. By His humility, we have a share in Him.

What next? He opened His mouth. He who first opened the mouths of the goodly fellowship of the prophets, speaks. He who spoke much through the prophets now speaks to us with His voice. Him whom we pray to in the beginning, “O Lord, open my lips and my mouth will declare you praise,” now opens His mouth. Blessed are those who heard the word of God that came forth from His mouth. Indeed, blessed are we who hear the same Word which has been preserved for us.

The Truth, Jesus Christ, speaks who can neither deceive nor be deceived. What does He say? “Blessed are the poor in spirit.” What is this mystery, that poverty is blessed? Foolish sons of Adam seek riches and desire them. Let unbelievers seek after them. But how long will we believers, we sons of light, be duped into seeking that which is visible and temporary, for the things of this world that will not last? “Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added to you.” Or if you prefer it said declaratively, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Can this be true? Without doubt, it is. For the One who promises is Himself Truth.

But what advantage is seeking and possessing God’s kingdom if all we do is grumble about it, if all we are is impatient for it? Instead, we have God’s promise to us in this life and we’re strengthened by seeing God’s present working for us.

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.” The death of a loved one has a way of bringing eternity into perspective for us. We’re not usually thinking about death on a daily basis; it doesn’t typically weigh on our hearts. But in the moments of mourning and grief, our love for our brother or sister who has passed on transcends time. We find comfort in God’s promise of eternity to us in the midst of tears and sadness.

In all your doings, remember your end. Sometimes we can get so focused on where we are that we forget where we’re going. The end goal that God has given us is eternity with Him. So what if others revile us, speak evil against us, abuse us, or

persecute us for Christ's name's sake? These things will come. But our eternity is certain! Our reward is great in heaven. Perils in life; our own frailty; guilt that haunts us. These remind us that lasting comfort can't be found in this life, but in our Savior Jesus.

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied." Whose righteousness? Our righteousness in God's sight? Isn't that accounted as filthy rags? If judged, won't all our righteousness be found unrighteous and inadequate? Our unclean heart is a disaster. It prevents us from being allowed into eternal life.

We're defiled and unclean in three ways: the desires of our flesh, our lust for the world's glory, and our guilt over past sins. We cannot destroy our bondage to the present evil world being in our bodies of death. What can we do? Sin lives in us. And it does so in one of two ways: either in hope, thinking that God is not greatly displeased by our sins, that He tolerates them or is just too busy to notice. Or we live lives in desperation, having a sense, having a feeling that God has no pity, that God has no mercy for us. In either case, we have made and put an idol, a false perception of God, in the place where God should be.

And so Christ casts down the idols. He takes our uncleanness and unrighteousness and He bears the sins of us all. The Lord of Mercy, His righteousness is the only righteousness that can save us. He alone is pure and makes us pure. None is pure except Him. He roots out the impure hedge and plants a pure seed in our hearts. By His absolution, our sins are washed away and our baptism is restored. He plucks out the sinful eye of our heart and puts in a pure one, so that we can see clearly. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Christ's purity becomes our own. Indeed, "Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the sons of God." Rightly are we called sons, because we received the finished work of *the* Son. Through Him we are reconciled and have peace with God. It is He who reconciled all things to Himself, both on earth and in heaven: the Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.

By Christ's poverty, by Christ's meekness, by Christ's tears the eternal image and likeness of God is restored to us. His poverty and servanthood gained our future. His meekness claims us as His own in the present. His tears, grief, bleeding, and dying for our sins even regains our past. For "Blessed" describes both Christ and those who have been joined by the Father to His kingdom. And His kingdom is ours by the suffering and death of Christ. Amen.

The Peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen. ✠BJF✠