

Sermon 11-01-20 (All Saints Sunday)
“Blessed are those who mourn – how?” – Rev. Markus Wegenast
Matthew 5:1-12

¹ Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, ² and he began to teach them, saying: ³ "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. ⁵ Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. ⁶ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. ⁷ Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. ⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. ⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God. ¹⁰ Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹ "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

1)

So this week my 5 year old and I had the conversation about death and dying. We recently started doing short morning devotion with each other. This week I told him about Jesus' resurrection. I could tell that Owen thought about it; he thought hard and eventually said:

“Daddy, when I die, yeah, I hope I come back to life too.”

That was precious to me. It's exactly the hope we are invited to trust into; today, on all saints Sunday, and every day.

I would imagine that All Saints Sunday this year is a bit different for you. Not only are you commemorating people you have lost from home during a recorded – you also live in a world that has seen over 1.1M people die within the last couple of month due to a pandemic.

Chances are that you know a person who has died because of complications with the coronavirus. Maybe you weren't able to attend the funeral of a loved one due to funeral home or church attendance limits.

Whether you have lost a loved one or friend due to Covid,
whether the person was an immediate family member or a far neighbor,
whether the person died peacefully or painstakingly premature,
today you are invited to allow your grief and to hold those persons in your heart.

2)

What is it like for you to hear the words of Jesus from the beatitudes where he says: “Blessed are those who mourn?”
“Blessed are those who mourn.”

Do you feel particularly blessed in your grief?! It becomes even more challenging when you consider that some translations of the Bible have Jesus say: “**Happy** are those who mourn.”

“Blessed/ HAPPY are those who mourn!”

Happy when you mourn, really? Sometimes we may be relieved when a loved one no longer suffers, but how can Jesus make such a blanket statement about all who mourn?

Grief is a real thing, and typically it hurts, it is painful, even when the person you mourn died peacefully at the end of a long life.

“Blessed/happy are those who mourn, for they will be comforted” Jesus says. I'm not sure how far into the future Jesus is projecting this comfort – the future tense in the Greek language in which Jesus' words were recorded is sometimes a bit tricky.

But friends, there is a powerful message in contemplating God's future when it comes to death, dying and grief.

We are invited to see that God's future always shines into our present; that God's future is connected to our today. That sounds a bit philosophical, but it also has some real practical power.

If you believe that the ultimate future in God is good and brings comfort - a wiping away of all tears - then this somehow has to inform our current life. You just live differently when you trust that God's got this and that pain and grief are not the end of the story.

There are so many things in this world and in our time that you can not be happy about. Mourning is not only happening in terms of someone's death. **You can mourn about...**

- **conflict** in your family
- **a broken relationship**
- **an injustice** that has been done to you
- **a racist comment** someone made
- **a divisive presidential election...** what else do you grieve about?

On this all saints day, it is good for us to realize that all the reasons we mourn are not the end of the story but await a comforting in God's future. That future doesn't even have to be the end of days!

3)

You know it's interesting. Right before Jesus talked about blessed are those who mourn, he says another strange thing that I think is connected:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Many of us feel poor in spirit these days. Many of us feel how the state of the world is affecting our happiness and drags us into dark moods. Our souls are suffering for the joy that is in God, some of us feel like they have to declare spiritual bankruptcy because all their faith practices have been challenged and changed.

Jesus says: "Not so fast. When you declare spiritual bankruptcy, don't think that's the end of your spiritual life. On the contrary. You are blessed; the kingdom of heaven is yours!" Wow!

Can you hear Jesus talk to you that way? Maybe you wouldn't say you're spiritually bankrupt; maybe you say: "I often find myself feeling hopeless about the future." Blessed are you, Jesus says. Blessed are you – **your hopelessness does not disqualify you from the kingdom!**

4)

We call today All Saints Day. We remember those who have passed from this age. It is God who considers them saints, it's not just a human tradition. Biblical sainthood is rooted in how much God loves us and redeems us through his son. And actually, sainthood is not just reserved for those who have died. The Bible calls all who follow Jesus "saints."

Maybe this is good for us to remember this week. This week you will either watch an election coverage or you will hear about it on Wednesday and for many days thereafter.

Please remember that the people who are on the other side may be saints in God's eyes. Even if you feel that the biblical standard of sainthood does not apply to all the people that come to your mind – may you be blessed with the mercy that God considered all people worth dying for. In Jesus Christ God bled his love for us – and he invites us to think just as highly of each other.

...

"Daddy, when I die, yeah, I hope I come back to life." – my 5 year old said. I too hope that, and I put that trust in my Lord Jesus.

I invite you today to do the same. Put your trust in Jesus and let him bless you with a happiness that comes in the midst of all your pains.

Amen.