

Sermon for November 2nd, 2025

ALL SAINTS' DAY

Revelation 7:9-17

9 After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, **10** and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" **11** And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, **12** saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen."

13 Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?" **14** I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Psalm 149

1 Praise the LORD!

Sing to the LORD a new song,
his praise in the assembly of the godly!

2 Let Israel be glad in his Maker;
let the children of Zion rejoice in their King!

3 Let them praise his name with dancing,
making melody to him with tambourine and lyre!

4 For the LORD takes pleasure in his people;
he adorns the humble with salvation.

5 Let the godly exult in glory;
let them sing for joy on their beds.

6 Let the high praises of God be in their throats
and two-edged swords in their hands,

7 to execute vengeance on the nations
and punishments on the peoples,

8 to bind their kings with chains
and their nobles with fetters of iron,

9 to execute on them the judgment written!
This is honor for all his godly ones.

Praise the LORD!

1 John 3:1-3

1 See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. **2** Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. **3** And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

Matthew 5:1-12

1 Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him.
2 And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:
3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
4 “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.
5 “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.
6 “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.
7 “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.
8 “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.
9 “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.
10 “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
11 “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Our text for meditation this All Saints' Day is on our Gospel reading.

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

Introduction

The Sermon on the Mount begins with what we call the Beatitudes, the set of blessings that our Lord Jesus pronounces on people with certain traits. Let's get something out of the way, and here I choose to engage in a crass complaint. The way in which this passage is used to manipulate people into a weird false vision of Christianity, and the way that people have *rejected* Christianity on account of that false vision, is perverse. I agonized over how exactly to preach on this passage *precisely* because of this stupid bad-faith dynamic that gets passed around by false teachers and anti-Christians alike.

This confusion is absolutely everywhere my friends, to the maddening point where people are rejecting Christianity without even reading this passage for themselves. Christ says the poor in spirit are blessed; a monk takes up that verse, claims that Jesus demands vows of poverty and starts telling everyone that they should be poor; then the conservative rejects Jesus because he doesn't want to be homeless! Jesus says the meek shall inherit the earth; some stupid pacifist trumpets that as support for his limp-wristed worldview and then men hear this and reject Christianity because they don't want to be wimps. And on and on it goes. To this day, just typing in “Beatitudes” in a search engine will show you endless examples of would-be theologians turning Christianity into a religion for losers, and idiots taking those teachers at their word as a pathetic excuse to reject salvation.

On account of this dynamic there is so much nonsense out there. What is to be done about it? Well, the only way to solve this problem is to teach the text for what our Lord is actually saying. Let us not waste our time trying to refute the distortions made by evil men, nor spend hours and hours reassuring nonbelievers (who won't listen anyway) that those other guys are wrong. For lack of a better way of putting it, we must simply dive into the text and become stronger Christians.

Whom does Christ Address?

St. Matthew records that Jesus went up a mountain (likely a very large hill for our modern understanding), and His *disciples* went to Him. He reserves this teaching for those who already believe in Him, and who come to listen to what He has to say. These are already disciples, and so they do not apply to those who do not believe. When Christ says someone is blessed, this *does not apply* to someone who doesn't belong to Him. A nonbeliever can be poor in spirit, mourning, meek, desiring righteousness, merciful, seeking purity, a peacemaker and persecuted – absolutely none of that will bring him blessing from on high. This is a message solely for the *Saints*.

The Sermon on the Mount begins with the assumption that whoever is listening is already a disciple. If you are Baptized and believe that Jesus Christ died for your sins and rose again on the third day *for you*, then all the treasury of Heaven is flung open to you, and our Heavenly Father looks upon you with nothing but Grace and love. But if someone does not believe, there is no point in sharing this teaching with them. Our Lord went up *away* from the braying crowds, and this sermon was only delivered to those who by all means were saved. And being assured that they were, our Lord sets about teaching them – and us – what it *looks like* to have a Christian personality. This is who His followers shall become, how the Saints come to behave as they grow in the faith.

The Beatitudes

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

This does not mean the physically poor, but spiritually poor. Over time, the believer will have a loose grip on his or her possessions whether they are physically rich or not. We recognize that our true wealth is in eternity, and can be content in all situations whether we have plenty or are in want.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

We are told here that the mournful are comforted, but elsewhere Scripture tells us to rejoice always.¹ This leads us to ask, what exactly are we mourning over? Well, the Christian grows to understand sorrow over his own sin, sorrow over seeing tragedy and injustice in this world, and at the same time holds a deep abiding joy in the salvation by which God promises to *fix* everything sorrowful in the world. We end up becoming a more *moral* people because we are aware that something is *wrong*.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

By “meek,” our Lord means that the Christian is not a bully. He does not browbeat, rob, or intimidate people with his power, but uses it for good things in this life. Believers are loathe to see violence as the first resort in any conflict, let alone the nastier and sneakier ways to use power like blackmail or sabotage. When Christ says the meek shall inherit the earth, He means it: He fits us for our royal estate in the latter days by training us for our eternal rulership with Him over the universe.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

This is related to the second. As we learn to mourn over our own sin and the ugliness that infects the world, at the same time we begin to foster a true desire to see *cleansing*, both in our *own* character and in the world around us. Christ promises to us that we shall see that day and be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

As Christ has been merciful to us, so are we to be merciful to others. As He has forgiven us our sins, so too must we forgive those who sin against us. Certainly we still oppose our enemies, but as mercy grows within our hearts we wish to see them *stopped* more than exacting some orchestrated fantasy of revenge.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

1 1 Thessalonians 5:16

In a word, the purity of heart that our Lord speaks of is a clean conscience. The believer does his best to live according to the Word of God, and when some sin or impurity occurs within his heart, he goes to our Lord for forgiveness so that he can go right back to living properly. Christians must not be hypocrites!

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

St. Paul elaborates on this line of thinking by saying “If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.”² While conflict is unavoidable in some senses, the Christian is an adult about it. We don't start fights over stupid matters, we don't solve everything with violence, and we prefer to settle everything without any casualties if it can be helped. And why is this the case? Because our Heavenly Father gave us life and peace, He loves life and peace, and He would see to it that we preserve both of these as much as we can.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

These are the same blessing for the same dynamic. Everybody on earth suffers, but the Christian who lives for God and follows His ways suffers for a good cause. Surely, people are persecuted out there for various political and religious causes; sometimes they deserve it, other times they are just unfortunate. But the Christian suffering for his faith is suffering despite there being nothing wrong and everything right with his beliefs. And since his faith in Christ deserves none of the pains of persecution, God sees to it that the believer is as richly rewarded as the prophets of old were. He shall make it right!

Christ Fulfills ALL of the Beatitudes

To finish up, we ought to be aware that at the end of the day Jesus is pointing to Himself in all of these things. No one has ever been poorer in spirit than the Son of God who humbled Himself to being born in a human body in a dirty little manger. No one has mourned more than our Savior who took all our sins upon Himself and felt the Father turning His face away. No one is more meek than Christ, who did not use His omnipotent power to destroy those who blasphemed Him to His own face. No one hungered and thirsted more for righteousness than our Savior, for He died so that *billions* of people in the future would counted righteous through faith in Him. No one is more merciful than Jesus, who freely offers everyone forgiveness and life in His Name no matter how much sin they have committed. No one has made peace as much as Jesus has and will – especially in terms of the peace He makes between us and His Father. And indeed, Jesus Christ suffered the worst persecution there is, having committed no sin whatsoever but still being murdered by those ugly authorities who hated the truth He told.

This means that Jesus Christ is all these things *normally*, but in His ministry He is all these things *for you* my friends. If you believe in Jesus, you must not worry that you haven't been enough of a peacemaker in life. You do not need to fret as though not being poor enough in spirit means you shall not inherit eternity. Instead, let us breathe a sigh of relief as our Savior tells us “I got this,” and receive

blessing from our Heavenly Father on Christ's account. If you believe in Jesus, you are counted as being the peacemaker, the meek one, the persecuted one, and pure in heart – even if you do not match up with your deeds.

Indeed, these are lofty and virtuous ideals to strive for in life, that we must serve and honor our Lord by trying our best to be like Him! By the help of the Holy Spirit we indeed shall find ourselves doing so as time goes on. But that does not require us to go off and be monks or pacifists, and we are under no obligations reject Christ's teachings which do not require us to be such ugly pseudo-Christians. Instead, let us walk in His strength and in the confidence that His obedience will bring us to greater maturity in the faith.

Now the Peace of our Lord, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.