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All Saints Sunday 2025

Each year on All Saints day we get a version of the beatitudes from Luke. Which is I trust intentional for a couple of reasons. First it is familiar. Those of us who have grown up in the church are very familiar with these words if not by memory just by sound or the rhythm in which they are read. Familiarity is helpful in the sense that it is grounding. Particularly on a day like All Saints Sunday when we are reminded that things are ever changing and for some of us in the room.....quite different from just a year or even weeks ago. As we pause and reflect on the ways our communities both here at church have changed and been impacted by loss and hardship.

And I am no expert but I think this version of the beatitudes from Luke often described as the Sermon on the plain is used because it is a bit more raw and messy than the version of Matthew that likely hung in our Sunday school classrooms growing up.

Jesus is talking to his disciples (those who have recently been set apart to represent both him and his movement) and the masses of people who gathered that day. This group was at minimum was as diverse as we are sitting here today but likely much more so, consisting of people from vastly different backgrounds, thoughts and views.

Jesus is preaching a pretty pointed and direct sermon on this day and he is not speaking in hypotheticals but directly to the people in their present experiences. Really seeing them (*and isn't that something... to really feel seen- I hope we all have those people in our lives with whom we can show up and be our authentic selves*). Sometimes though, I think it's most helpful if one of those people can also be ourselves. So I want us to just for a second take inventory on how we are all showing up today. How we are feeling in this moment...What is it that you are carrying with you today. Are you feeling emotions after that slide show that surprised you? Are you holding something heavier you are hoping in being here will be made a little lighter.?

We come to worship seeking a lot of things, but where is it that you want Jesus to meet you today? In what situation?

Now any given Sunday Pastor Leah or myself show up and try to give you something meaningful to ponder. An angle in which to approach the text that will hopefully serve you in some way. I am hoping on some days we say share words that make you feel less alone, on others, I hope we give words to the hurts and the struggles of the world we are all experiencing. And always, I hope we remind you of your blessedness and your beloved-ness in the eyes of God.

In this sermon. Jesus is doing just that. Prepping the people for all that is ahead and giving them strategies for all that they might face. Some compare Jesus' strategy to be that of a teacher

(equipping and preparing their students for the real world), others might describe him as a coach (offering words of encouragement and a little tough love to motivate them). But either way Jesus is speaking to them as individuals who have a heart for his vision. He is speaking to them in plain language in words they can understand. He is speaking to them as they present themselves.

I know I often tell myself that my merits as your pastor will be based on my humanness more than my holiness and I believe this to be true. Jesus' humanity in this instance gives him a platform to see the people and know what they are going through first hand as he walks along side them. In addition to Jesus prepping them for all that will come he is able to stand there in shared experience. Jesus embodies the beatitudes in so much that Jesus too was poor, Jesus knew hunger, Jesus wept. Jesus experienced first hand what it was like to be hated and reviled. He is speaking to the people about the realities of their shared experiences as well as of the life he wants them to lead too.

In this sermon it is easy to hear the Woe's as shaming. We can identify with many of them.

Without much effort at all we can see ourselves in those places of wealth, power and privilege, but I think Jesus' intent is that they serve as a warning.

The Eugene Peterson's translation of the message he has Jesus saying,

“Trouble ahead if you think you have it made.

Trouble ahead... There is suffering to be met and your going to meet it.

trouble ahead... if you think you have it made

trouble ahead... if you're satisfied with yourself

trouble aheadif you think life is all fun and games. there's suffering to be met, and you're going to meet it.

Trouble ahead... when you live only for the approval of others saying what flatters them.. doing what indulges them.”

pause

Jesus, knowing full well all that the world would ask of his followers. Invites them to pay attention.

To make note of those around them,
before them
and especially behind them.

The intent of the beatitudes in many ways is to remind us that nothing can separate us from the love of God. Jesus is making the point through word and also through how he lived his life. Reminding us that that we are called to love in radical ways. To love our enemies, to pause and

spend time with those whom are hurting to seek out community in our own personal times of pain and loss.

Have you even caught yourself in that place of telling others what you think they might want to hear? Doesn't feel particularly awesome does it. I think we are aware of occasions and situations in which we find ourselves stepping out of our integrity.

Jesus is asking us here to respond from our best not our worst. Jesus is not asking us to respond from a place of perfection but he is encouraging us to view the world and each other honestly and sincerely, through a lens of love. He is calling on us all to respond from the source of our identity.

So...WHAT IS THE SOURCE OF YOUR IDENTITY???

We might at first think of that of our cultural identity, but this has its drawbacks because once we start defining ourselves in this way (*often out of what makes us different from those who are not like us*) lines are drawn and people are left out.

Sure the crux of our identity may come from family systems. But this proves to be limiting and restrictive too. Especially for those of us from very small family systems...

Basically, if how we are defining the source of our identity has groups, bounds or limits it is not the true source. But if our identity comes from God and deep in our bones we understanding that our identity is in God and our belovedness we are certainly more equipped to both live in and respond in love. And friends, because it is in God that we find our identity, we are in no position to make decisions about who's in or out.

Sadly it might take us some practice to unlearn some things the world taught us. Unlearn some things our families or culture taught us to stay rooted in this belief that we are formed and called in love.

We will be challenged in this present time in our world. This season in the church when we are called to turn this love into action. We will have to do the ongoing work of checking in with ourselves and those around us. We will have to be committed and intentional to making sure this mission and vision of Jesus for all to flourish and succeed is executed in both small and bit ways.

Jesus wants us to flourish and succeed. He wants our identity in the world to be that of love and light and his hope is that the lifestyle will be contagious.

Which brings me back to the saints. Now many individuals in our slide show today might not appreciate being held up as Saints or experts in the category of love and light... (Though I trust

a few of them would thoroughly enjoy it ;)). But as protestants this too is part of all of our identity. We are all saints. Hopefully we have several people in our lives that have shined a light for us. Individuals that have been pivotal to modeling faith and love for us. Who are some of these people who have been models?

Saint is not really used as a term for a super Christian. It's used for all of us. We have perhaps forgotten that the point of all saints is that through the grace of God we are all made to be saints that in time the communion of saints takes on the character of Jesus which is the character of Mercy and love. And many of the individuals we lift up and named today taught us much about love and light and shared it in the world through their time, gifts, talents and joy. Many of them modeled this through hardships, sadness, sickness and loneliness too. They, like Jesus can challenge us today to grow in compassion. To increase our hearts and attention to those among us who are hurting, who are hungry, who are suffering, who are down on their luck. And increase our hearts and attentions to ourselves in these ways too.

Jesus is saying this is how you ought to live... yes people will be cruel, yes you will witness acts of violence in the world, but lift up the lowly, comfort the grieving.. but most of all love first. Love all.

Weekly, daily, minute to minute Love. This is how you ought to live. We are not talking about a Christ who extends love only in the hard times but at all times. May we also. Amen.