

Matthew 5:1-12
"Blessed are We"
All Saints' Day (Observed)

November 2, 2025
Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, West Salem, Wisc.
Pastor Peter Adelsen

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen! Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

"Seeing the crowds, [Jesus] went up on the mountain, and when He sat down, His disciples came to Him. And He opened His mouth and taught them" (Matthew 5:1-2).

Today, the one holy Christian and apostolic Church observes the Festival of All Saints. The joy of this feast day is in its celebration of the unity of the Church Triumphant – *those saints gathered already into rest in Christ Jesus* – and the Church Militant – *the present and future Church that struggles still under daily crosses*. Together, both the Church Triumphant and the Church Militant constitute but one communion, one fellowship divine.

On this observance of All Saints, a good question to ask is who are the saints? Typically, there are three common usages for that term "saint." The most common usage of the word "saint" are for those exceptional Christians whom from tradition or a very formal process has granted the letters "St" be placed before their names. We can think of St. Paul, St. Peter, St. Augustine.

The second-most common usage of "saint" is a sort of street usage of that word, like "She's such a saint to put up with that!"

The third-most common usage of "saint" are those Christians who've died and have gone to heaven. There is certainly something to each of these definitions of "saint."

But the Biblical definition of "saint" is a bit different. You see, this word "saint" comes from the Latin rendering the Greek *hagios*, or "holy ones." A "saint" is a "holy one." And who are these holy ones? Those who ***"have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb"*** (Revelation 7:14b).

To be holy requires not just a lot of patience or the endorsement of the Church, it requires being without sin. And you know what, St. Paul, St. Peter, and St. Augustine were sinners and were each incapable of cleansing away their own sin, just as we can't wipe away our own sins.

So, to be without sin requires having our sins taken away. And our sins can only be taken away through the perfect sacrifice: the blood of Jesus' death on the cross, received by faith. So, a saint – *a holy one* – is one who believes Jesus has died to save him or her from their sins.

In today's Gospel reading, Jesus emphatically says that His saints are blessed. He says, "The One who is meek, merciful, a peacemaker. You are a saint. You who are poor in spirit. You are a saint. You who hunger and thirst for righteousness. You are a saint. You who are persecuted for His sake. You are a saint." Jesus says His saints are blessed!

But this is the opposite of what the Jews then expected. You see, most Jews during Jesus' earthly ministry expected the Messiah to be, first of all, a military and political leader who would deliver them from the yoke of Rome and establish a prosperous Jewish earthy kingdom that would lead the world. They expected the Messiah to be greater than any other king, leader, or prophet in their history. In fact, after Jesus fed the five thousand, the people tried to make Jesus their king by force. These Jews saw Jesus as their anticipated leader who would create a great welfare state as He would provide for all their routine physical needs. But Jesus would not let Himself be mistaken for that sort of a king.

Instead, they got this Jesus, who calls the poor, blessed; the meek, blessed; the peacemakers, blessed; the persecuted, blessed. The Sermon on the Mount and its Beatitudes are utterly contrary to those of human reason.

But in order to properly understand this sermon of Jesus, we must keep in mind the audience. The audience was, primarily, Jesus' disciples, although a large crowd who had been following Jesus were evidently in the background listening in. The purpose of this sermon was to give Christ's disciples a better understanding of the God-pleasing life. However, an unbeliever may interpret Jesus' words today as a prescription for making oneself righteous and earning a place in the kingdom of God. But that is *not* what Jesus is teaching.

You see, Jesus' Beatitudes do not tell us how to become blessed, but they rather describe the blessedness that already belongs in Christ. These Beatitudes do not describe eight kinds of believers, but they tell eight ways all Christians are blessed.

Again, all Christians are poor in spirit. Christians all mourn and all are meek. Christians all hunger and thirst for righteousness and are all merciful and pure in heart. Christians are all peacemakers and are persecuted for righteousness.

Jesus says: ***“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”*** (Matthew 5:3). Those who are poor in spirit recognize their spiritual poverty, their sinfulness and unworthiness in God’s sight. They realize that they sin daily and deserve nothing but present and eternal punishment from God. These “poor in spirit” admit that their efforts at living up to God’s standards as expressed in the Ten Commandments fall miserably short.

You see, God demands one hundred-percent performance, but we – *you and me* – are stuck at zero. So, how do we qualify to be numbered as heirs of the kingdom of heaven? Well, we are like empty vessels ready to be filled. As the “poor in spirit,” we know that we can only become rich before God through faith in Christ Jesus.

You see, it is only by Christ’s perfect obedience to all of God’s commandments and His sacrificial death on the cross for all the sins of the world – and by His resurrection and ascension – that we are numbered in the kingdom of heaven. And oddly enough, God the Father gives us all the credit for Jesus’ perfect righteousness. It is only through Jesus’ blood and merit that the spiritually poor become rich by faith.

And so, ***“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth”*** (Matthew 5:5). The meek are not boisterous and demanding and they do not insist on their own rights without consideration with others. The meek endure mistreatment without retaliating. Like Jesus, the meek place the matter of vengeance in God’s hands. And to the surprise of many, by faith, these meek will inherit the earth.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8). Our hearts are naturally sinful and unclean. Our hearts are filthy. Our hearts need constant cleansing. So, it is appropriate that after we hear God’s Word proclaimed, we so often join King David as we call upon the Holy Spirit to ***“create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me”*** (Psalm 51:10). By faith, Jesus makes us pure through His blood and merit.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God” (Matthew 5:9). Peacemakers actively strive to make peace when there is enmity or hostility. They offer their services as mediators between warring nations or quarreling relatives or hostile neighbors.

Insofar as possible, the peacemakers strive to live in peace with all people (Hebrews 12:14), but they are to be always ready to contend for God's truth and justice when circumstances require it. Although peace is always desirable, peace at any price is not acceptable. Even Jesus said that He – *the Prince of Peace* – would disrupt peace. So, His saving Gospel would divide families, but true peace is only given when we are at peace with God through faith in His Son Jesus Christ.

And so, “***Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven***” (Matthew 5:10). For sure, if we are persecuted or punished for wrongdoing, we have no right to complain. But we must also expect to suffer at times for saying and doing what is right. That is what happened to Jesus, so that we must expect the same from the fallen world.

We can recall how all of God's prophets suffered persecution at the hands of sinful men who should have welcomed and honored them. This has not changed, because sinful humanity does not change. Even to this day, Christians who publicly confess the Holy Scriptures as God's inerrant Word persecute those who proclaim the whole counsel of God to them. So often, we are prone to compromise or overlook what God so clearly says in His Word. But all who remain faithful to God's truth will be richly rewarded in heaven. And again, this reward is all by God's grace through faith in Christ, not yours or my merit, but by Jesus' blood and merit alone.

Each of these Beatitudes remind us of the blessedness that belongs to all who are in Christ. And if you are in Christ, you are truly blessed.

You and I are holy because He has washed us in His blood. By faith, you are among the blessed. So, blessed are we, for Jesus continually blesses us through His Word and His Sacraments. He blesses us through His Word so that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life. He blesses us through His Sacrament as we receive the blessings of His cross: forgiveness of sins, eternal life and salvation. By faith, He makes us who are poor in spirit, the richest in the kingdom of heaven and all through His blood and His merit. In Jesus, yours and my sins are forgiven, so rejoice and be glad for our reward is great in heaven! In Jesus, we are declared saints and we are blessed to be united with the Church Triumphant as we, with them, constitute one communion and one fellowship divine. Amen.

*The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding,
keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.*

+ SOLI DEO GLORIA +