

Sermon for All Saints Day 2020

Matt 5:1-12

The sermon on the mount is often called the manifesto or the blueprint for citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven, that is the Saints, you and me. And it makes it very clear that we are ordinary people with all the flaws of ordinary people and all the difficulties, stresses and sorrows of ordinary people. Today we are looking at the Beatitudes. 8 types of people that Jesus says are blessed, and of course some of us might be included in more than one category.

What does this word blessed mean exactly? It is a multi-faceted word. We often use it to mean we feel very lucky, as if God has smiled on us, looked favourably upon us maybe. And it can mean this, it can also mean made Holy, which is also true of each one of us, we are made Holy through our faith in Jesus, by our association with Him, we are Holy because He is Holy. And then it means those who live with God in Heaven. All of these meanings can be inferred in this passage. Each beatitude has three parts, first comes the blessing, you are blessed by God if or when.....

The second part is an attribute or a calling, a vocation. And then comes the promise. So blessing, attribute, promise, or a destiny.

So, we have already been blessed, this is who we are and this is our destiny and will be our reward.

Blessed are the poor in Spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. The poor in Spirit is a term that we see used in the Psalms and it means someone who is totally reliant on God because they have nothing else left, they are ground down and pushed around and the promise is the joy of sheer undreamed of Grace. The Grace of the Kingdom of Heaven.

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Blessed are those who mourn, because those who mourn understand suffering, their hearts are broken and Jesus Himself came to bind up the broken hearted, they will be comforted by Jesus Himself.

Blessed are the meek. Victory will not ultimately go to the strong and powerful but to those who know themselves to be small before God, that is what meekness means. And God will exalt them because He knows that it won't make them proud and big headed. Whatever happens they will always know that they are small before God.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, those who long to be good, to be filled with goodness from God, that is a desire He will answer, they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, those who are never legalistic and who don't judge, mercy is a quality of divine love and if you have it you will certainly receive it. Maybe think of this next time you say the Lord's prayer, instead of saying, "Forgive us our sins or our trespasses as we forgive those who sin against us" or "we forgive those who trespass against us", try, "have mercy on us as we have mercy on those who sin or trespass against us".

Blessed are the pure in heart, it is a special gift to have the singleness of vision that is not corrupted by looking at the things of this world with lust. To have a heart that wants nothing but God, and the reward for such a heart will be indeed to see Him clearly.

Blessed are the peacemakers, those who don't assert themselves and their desires, who don't cause division, but rather seek to reconcile those who are estranged from each other. Sadly, the church itself desperately needs peacemakers. Their reward and their destiny is to be called children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. There is a special peace and joy about those who are

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prepared to lose everything and even to face persecution and death for the sake of the Gospel of Christ. We can't really claim to know much about this but we need to remember to hold our brothers and sisters who are being persecuted in our prayers.

These are the qualities that Jesus is looking for in us, in the citizens of heaven. Complete trust in Him, reliance on Him, knowing what it is to suffer and be broken hearted, meekness – a real understanding of who we are before God, a great desire for righteousness or goodness, able to be merciful, seeking to be pure in heart, peacemakers and those willing to face loss and persecution for His sake. It is paradoxical and profound. Not at all the qualities that this world seeks and reveres. In the beatitudes Jesus really fleshes out Micah 6:8

“He has shown you, oh mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God”.

I am going to read you a poem called, In the kingdom of Mammon by Peter Dainty and then I am going to read the beatitudes again from the Message version. I encourage you to think about which of them you identify with and receive God's blessing and think about the reward that comes with it and be encouraged.

In the kingdom of Mammon they firmly believe
that happiness is a cigar,
an expensive meal, a successful deal,
or a luxury motor car.
But the Kingdom of heaven belongs to the poor
who want no more.

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**In the kingdom of Mammon they laugh and they sing
to the promptings of pleasure machines;
they are grimly resolved to enjoy every hour
and perpetuate youth by all means.**

**But God gives true comfort to all those who mourn
and are reborn.**

**In the kingdom of Mammon they know how to rule
with arrogant metallic powers;
they scan the horizon with violent eyes
from distant electronic towers.**

**But God has apportioned this earth to the meek,
who gently seek.**

**In the kingdom of Mammon they hunger and thirst
for possessions and pleasure and power;
and though the first taste may be sweet to the tongue,
their increase is putrid and sour.**

**But those who crave good are eternally filled,
as God has willed.**

**In the kingdom of Mammon the law of the state
is enforced with an iron intent;
the offender is crushed with the harshest revenge
that justice's slaves can invent.**

**But God reserves mercy for those who forgive,
glad to let live.**

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**In the kingdom of Mammon they search for the truth
in a million mystical ways:**

**from magic and trances to dangerous drugs,
and the latest non-sensible craze.**

**But God shines on those who combine a pure heart
with childlike art.**

**In the kingdom of Mammon they're masters of war
with their missiles and bombers and guns;
they are always prepared for surprising attacks
and the blazing of nuclear suns.**

**But the children of God are the ones who make peace;
may they increase.**

**In the kingdom of Mammon they torture and kill
for the sake of the popular good;
any threat to the state will be jailed without trial
or nailed to a blunt cross of wood.**

**But God's Kingdom belongs to all those who endure,
faithful and sure.**

**The kingdom of Mammon looks noble and grand
in the glare of technology's day,
but its concrete foundations are rooted in sand
and are ready to crumble away.**

**The Kingdom of Heaven is founded on rock;
proof against shock.**

Peter Dainty