

"All Saints Day, A Day Of Remembering" Matthew 5:1-9

Why are the Beatitudes read on All Saints Day? A very good question, I'll come back to it in a moment. was curious about that.

All Saints day began in the early centuries of Christianity to remember those who refused to reject their faith in Jesus and were Martyred for their faith. We know some of them.

I'll tell you the story of two of them. Stephen was the first in Acts. As they were stoning Stephen, Luke tells us that he looked up to heaven and saw the glory of the Lord. Looking up he said **"I see heaven open And the Son of Man standing there at the right hand of God."** That made them angrier, and they threw more stones, because they knew those words "Son of Man" was the phrase Jesus used for himself. Luke writes: On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem.

Then James was arrested and beheaded by Herod.

Eventually Peter and Paul crucified in Rome.

You are probably familiar with a man named Polycarp. He lived about 200 years after the Christian church was founded. Polycarp was Bishop of the church at Smyrna (present day Turkey). A disciple of John and thus Jesus. Persecution broke out in Smyrna, and many Christians were killed in the arena.

The bloodthirsty crowd would not be satisfied until they had killed their leader and sent a search party to find him. He was brought before the **Roman authorities and told to curse Christ and he would be released.** He replied, **"Eighty-six years have I served him, and he has done me no wrong: how then can I blaspheme my king who saved me?"** The Roman officer replied, **"Unless you change your mind, I will have you burnt alive."** It is hard to picture a smile on the face of Polycarp or Justin as they were being burned or beheaded.

Yet, "blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness' sake," Jesus declares. Yet that was peace on the face of Stephen. We could add any number of others who lived out the beatitudes, showing mercy and seeking to be peacemakers.

We know from Revelation 6 The Apostle John writes in Revelation **"When the Lamb opened the 5th seal I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the testimony of God and the testimony they maintained. They called out in a loud voice. How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our death."** On this day, we await His return. that those who are martyred for their faith that their souls are at the altar of God in heaven.

Another way that we use the word Saints is to refer to ordinary Christians as saints. Listen to the Apostle Paul: **Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus. We are saints because of our connection to Jesus by baptism God sees us already holy in His sight.**

Now back to our opening question **Why the beatitudes on All Saints day?**

We read the Beatitudes on All Saints Day because the Saints we celebrate are those who have committed their lives to Christ by living out the beatitudes. All Saints are all those who have had the courage to be different, to stand apart from the crowd. This is the first sermon of Jesus and he is telling those who follow him this is how we should live.

Martin Luther interpreted the Beatitudes as describing the state of a person who has been humbled by God's grace and is no longer trying to earn salvation through their own efforts. He saw them as a result of faith, describing how a person is "blessed" after being transformed by divine mercy.

In the Beatitudes Jesus explains that the kingdom of God is very different than the kingdom of the world. Paul writes in Romans 12 In view of God's mercy offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God. Jesus gives advice to all saints believers who follow him, on Christian living and behavior in the beatitudes

The Beatitudes are more for living saints than for those who have died. The pronouncements of blessing Jesus offers here are in the present and future tenses, not in the past tense. "Blessed are ... for they will...." These words of Jesus are his advice for experiencing the "good life". I'm only going to focus on the first few verses.

Rev Jeff Gibbs of Concordia seminary in St Louis said that this word Blessed could be translated **"saved" "rescued". Blessed doesn't mean happy. Blessed is a condition. To be blessed in the Bible is to be rescued, to be saved, to be delivered from danger. Blessed is a condition.**

This phrase, "**blessed are the poor in spirit,**" It's a condition of spiritual poverty, These are those who have nothing to offer God you are completely dependent on God. You recognize your need for God's help. You know salvation is a gift of God by faith not human effort.

When Nicodemus came to Jesus at night he knew something was not working. His dependence on keeping Jewish commandments perfectly by his own ability was failing. For a moment he is "poor in spirit" knowing he could not save himself, he does not measure up to the holiness God requires. Neither can we. Jesus said to be born of the Spirit. Which means that we believe and rely on God's promise that the work and death of Jesus on The cross is enough to make us righteous before God.

It is only the Holy Spirit that enables us to believe how the perfect life and blood of a man shed on the cross, 2000 years ago can bring peace to a worried soul. When we hunger for righteousness, then in Jesus, we find satisfaction and security.

Blessed are the merciful. As living saints we are to show mercy, To be pure in heart is to know that we are redeemed and forgiven. As followers of a merciful king, we show mercy. We put into practice the words that we pray in the Lord's prayer Forgive us our sins as we forgive others. Christians are merciful people. Blessed if persecuted for righteousness, theirs Is the kingdom of heaven. Those who live in the kingdom of Jesus know that Christianity is different. **It is a kingdom where membership is given not purchased. God speaks a word of grace, undeserved, difficult to comprehend, hard to believe. He declares us righteous, at peace with Him, all our failures pardoned, all our sins forgiven. This week I heard a great Phrase. Paul reminds us that the Holy Spirit is our deposit for the gift of eternal life.** (Ephesians 1:13-14)

Your name is not written in the Book of Life in pencil with an eraser. Your name is secured in God's Book of life by the blood of Jesus, who stands at the right hand of God interceding for is. My Friends. No other religion offers such a message. **All others demand the right performance, the right sacrifice, the right chant, the right ritual, the right experience. Theirs is a kingdom of barter and tradeoffs; you do this and your God will give you what you want.**

Christianity is alone in promising a resurrected glorified body. Christianity and Christianity alone can claim, "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord." Jesus entered this world to offer His perfect life for our sinful existence. He died the death our sins deserved; He paid the punishment price of our disobedience. Jesus took our place. He rose, physically from the grave.

That's why Paul could write: **"I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus."**

Every martyr stood firm unmovable on this promise of God. Yes, they gave up their earthly existence, and now rest at the altar of God awaiting their resurrected body.

The words of Jesus are true. He has planted His words in my heart. If by chance you are afraid or unsure of your eternal address listen to Jesus: **"In My Father's house are many rooms and I will prepare them for your arrival... I myself will come and take you to be where I am."**

Jesus ends the Sermon on the Mount with these words: **"Therefore everyone who hears these words of min and puts them into practice is like as wise man who built his house on the rock. The rains came down. The floods came up. The winds of societal pressure blew but the house did not fall."**