

Text: Matthew 5:1-12

Theme: Blessed Ones

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

My dear beloved flock, the text for our meditation this morning is the Holy Gospel according to Saint Matthew, the fifth chapter verses one through twelve.

Boys and girls, how are you doing today? Are you happy today? Maybe? Not sure? The word blessed, sometimes translated as happy, appears a lot in our text for today. What makes you happy? Would you be happy if we got a lot of snow and school closed? Would you be happy if people were kind to you instead of being mean? When you are sick, it can seem like you'd be happy if you were healthy again. How are we made happy by Jesus? How does Christ make us one of the blessed ones? Ponder these questions as you hear the rest of the sermon. You may go back to your seats and those who love you.

Who are blessed Ones?

Today we gather to observe the feast of All Saints. We gather to celebrate and remember all of those saints who have gone before us, including Gary, Bernie, David and Darlene. As we sang in our opening hymn, "How Blest are they!" In our text for today, Jesus uses the Greek word *makarios* nine times.

*Makarios* usually describes the man who is singularly favored by God and therefore in some sense “happy.”<sup>1</sup>

Favored by God, truly those are the blessed ones. What makes someone a person favored by God? Are people blessed and favored by God because of what they do or have? Look at the words of our Lord. Blessed ones have nothing. Jesus declares that they are poor, both physically and spiritually. They are hungry and thirsty. They mourn. They are merciful. They are pure in heart. They are peacemakers. They are persecuted and reviled.

It is easy to take these words of Jesus and make them into laws to get the perceived blessings. “I have to work harder at being poorer in spirit.” “I have to work at mourning. I need to cry more and about more things. I need to be sadder.” “I need to be meeker, at being hungrier and thirstier for righteousness.” To do this misses the point, being a blessed one is not about what you do. The words of Jesus show that we can do contribute nothing in order to be Blessed Ones. Being one favored by God is not a result of your own actions. It is not something that we have earned. Blessed ones are sinners who realize and mourn that they are sinners. They are those who do not hide their sins or deny that they have done them. Rather, they realize that they have nothing. They admit their moral bankruptcy, complete and utter poverty before God.

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<sup>1</sup> Carson, D. A. (1984). [Matthew](#). In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Vol. 8, p. 131). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

Ask any of the saints of old and they will state as much. Every time we gather for worship, we confess this fact. We admit the fact that we are nothing. We are sinners in our very thoughts, words, and deeds. We lie, cheat, steal, covet the possessions and riches of others. We are born and conceived in sin, in complete and utter poverty, not even a cent to our name. We cannot even hold up the very best of our good works as even that is worthless. As Isaiah writes, "We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away." So how are the saints, both of old and present day, how are we made blessed ones? We are blessed not because of ourselves but in spite of ourselves.

Blessed ones in Christ!

Blessed ones are blessed outside of themselves. We are blessed to be members of the kingdom of God purely because of His grace and mercy. In love, Jesus, the only-begotten Son of the Father, became poor, hungry, and meek for us. He laid aside the glory, honor, and Divine Majesty of the Holy Trinity and entered into His creation. He was born of the blessed Virgin Mary. He went to the cross, bearing the sins of humanity, bearing your sins and mine. There on Calvary, Jesus suffers, bleeds and dies. By the death of Jesus, every single one of our sins are paid for. Jesus bears our poverty and a great exchange takes place. Our poverty is taken away and we are given all of the riches of heaven.

What makes one a saint, a blessed one? It's all about Jesus. Blessed ones are blessed because of Jesus' death and

resurrection from the dead. Our poverty is removed. Our mourning is given comfort, whether mourning over our sins, or over the death of loved ones. As John writes in Revelation, “God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.” We can ask for no greater comfort than from God Himself. Comfort is given to us because we know that our sins are forgiven. Because of Jesus’ resurrection, He has destroyed the power of death and the grave. One day, when He comes again in power and glory, the dead themselves will be raised, and the glory of blessed ones will be revealed for all to see. On that great day, our great hunger and thirst for righteousness will be fully and completely satisfied as we will be with Him who is righteous and see Him face to face forever and ever.

Until that great day, may we always be meek and poor, realizing and confessing our poverty because of our sins, receiving forgiveness for them by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ through the Word and Sacraments that He gives to us, and ever rejoicing in the great wealth and blessing that He gives to us as members of His Kingdom, now and forever.

May the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard and keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.