

The Festival of All Saints
St. Matthew 5:1-12
November 1st, 2024
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Great Is Your Reward in Heaven

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Sermon Text:

“Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets that were before you.”

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

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

My dear friends, this Gospel reading from the Apostle and Evangelist St. Matthew finds its corollary in the Gospel of the Evangelist St. Luke. In St. Luke's Gospel version of the Sermon on the Mount, we get some background information of the events leading up to this Sermon of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. We are told by St. Luke that the previous night our Lord had spent the entire night in prayer to the heavenly Father. Upon completion of His prayer, He chooses the twelve men who would be His Apostles. Going up on the Mountain, He sits down with His newly chosen Apostles, and others who had gathered together with the Apostles, and He preaches this Sermon on the Mount. This Sermon is the embodiment of our Lord's preaching while He was on this earth. It encompasses His instructions to His Apostles, those who would be sent out into all nations to teach them the things which they had been taught from the Lord.

It is the teachings of the Apostles, which they had received from the Lord + Jesus, that makes up the doctrines of the One, Holy, and Apostolic Christian Church. Our teachings are the Apostles' teachings, because they are the Lord's teachings. Everything that we believe, teach, and confess is from the holy Apostles. All the saints who ever lived, have based their faith on the teachings of the Apostles. They have based their faith upon that which the Lord + Jesus taught His Apostles in the Sermon on the Mount, the summary of our Lord's earthly teachings. These are the same teachings that the Prophets of the Old Testament also taught. The saints who came before the birth of our Lord in the flesh, also taught His teachings to all those who clung to the promise of the Messiah in faith. Every saint of the Lord, both those on earth and those in heaven, who believed on the Messiah both before His Incarnation and after, cling in faith to Him on account of what He teaches us through the Prophets and Apostles.

This same teaching is preached also today through the faithful Bishops, Pastors, and Deacons of the One, Holy, and Apostolic Christian Church. We teach and preach what we have received from our forefathers, from all those who have gone before us. It is this teaching that makes people into saints; makes them into the holy ones of the Lord God. For by this teaching they cling in faith to Him and gladly

and willingly receive His good gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation. Today's Gospel reading for the Festival of All Saints summarizes what it is to be a saint. If you have ever wondered why the Gospel pericope for the Festival of All Saints is the Beatitudes, this is the reason. These blessings of the Lord + Jesus reveal to us what it means to be a saint. These Beatitudes are a description of every saint of the Lord God. Let us hear what it means for us to be a saint from our Lord + Jesus.

The first quality of a saint is to be poor in spirit. Not just poor, that is, without a lot of money, but poor in spirit. Now, obviously this does not mean that one has a low amount of the Spirit. That would not be much of a blessing. No, my dear friends, to be poor in spirit is to be humble. It is to recognize first and foremost that we are poor, miserable sinners in need of the Lord God's grace and mercy. One who is prideful or haughty cannot know their need. This is why the Scriptures teach that pride cometh before a fall. For a prideful person believes and imagines that they are not as bad off as they truly are. A humble person, however, one who is poor in spirit, knows his need, and seeks it from the only source which he can obtain it, from the Lord God. This is why the kingdom of heaven is theirs, for knowing they need to find salvation outside of themselves, they seek for it diligently from the Lord God alone. They find in it Him when He reveals to them His grace and mercy; when He reveals to them the kingdom of heaven.

The same is true of the second quality of a saint. A saint is someone who mourns. This does not simply mean someone who is sad all the time. Nor is it someone who suffers from depression. It is not even the mourning one does when bad things have happened to them. This mourning is a specific kind of mourning. It is the mourning over one's sins and transgressions. When we weep over our trespasses and iniquities, our Lord + Jesus provides the comfort. That comfort is found in the Absolution of our sins and trespasses. For the Absolution given to us by the Lord's Ministers points us to the suffering and death of our Savior, + Jesus, the Christ. The Absolution points us to the cross of our Lord. In our Lord's death we find comfort for our sorrow and mourning. For through Him alone, we have life and salvation.

Our mourning over our sins, which is a result of us being poor in spirit, leads us to become meek, the third quality of a saint. This quality is produced in the penitent and believing sinner by a deep sense of unworthiness before the face of the Lord God. This is pictured in the Prodigal Son. When he had come to his senses he returned to his father and confessed that he was not worthy to be called his son, but only deserved to be a servant. When we are poor in spirit, and mourn over our sins, we also become meek, as it is with all the saints. We acknowledge our unworthiness to receive the gifts of the Lord God. And what does He do? He grants them to us all. Our Lord + Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount promises us that we will inherit the earth. This is not to be understood as simply receiving a plot of land to call our own. No, my friends, this is the same promise made to the children of Israel when they were in Egypt and dwelt in the wilderness for forty years. They were given the promise of receiving the Promised Land. The meekness of the saints will give them the gift of the Promised Land of heaven.

Having received such a great promise; having received the promise of such a great gift, all the saints also share in the fourth quality: to hunger and thirst after righteousness. In the Exhortation to Holy Communion which we hear before receiving communion in almost every Divine Service, we hear that the Lord's Supper is for all those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, and who humbly confess their sins. Two qualities of the saints are the requirements to receive the Lord's Supper. Those who humbly confess their sins, seek after righteousness—they hunger and thirst for it—because they want to be freed from their sins and transgressions. In this Holy Supper we are given the forgiveness of our sins when we eat His Body and drink His Blood in, with, and under the bread and wine. Through this meal where we hunger and thirst for righteousness, we are filled with forgiveness, life, and salvation.

In the Sacrament of the Altar, we receive mercy from the Lord, for we are unworthy to eat our

Lord's Body and Blood in bread and wine. We are unworthy to receive forgiveness, life, and salvation, but our Lord shows us mercy, and gives us His true and substantial Body and Blood in bread and wine so that we might have forgiveness, life, and salvation. Through this meal we are shown mercy. This mercy produces in the saints the fifth quality of a saint: mercy. As we have been shown mercy, we also show mercy to others. As the Lord God has loved us, so we too love our neighbor as ourselves. In showing mercy to others, we also obtain mercy. Just as we pray in the Lord's Prayer to forgive the sins of those who have sinned against us. We receive forgiveness just as we forgive others. We receive mercy just as we show mercy. We show mercy, because our Lord has shown us mercy. We forgive, because we have been forgiven. We love, because we have been loved.

This love, mercy, and forgiveness was first shown to us by the Lord God when He washed away our sins in the waters of Holy Baptism. Through Holy Baptism we have been made clean and pure. Through our Lord's love, mercy, and forgiveness, we are made pure in heart, the sixth quality of a saint. We are pure in heart, because our Lord God has made us pure in heart through the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Ghost. We remind ourselves that we are pure in heart whenever we make the sign of the holy cross. For in making this sign we remind ourselves of the cross of the Lord + Jesus, the cross and death into which we were baptized. By our Lord's suffering and death, we have had all our sins paid for, so that we are clean and pure; we are pure in heart through our Lord's works and merits.

On account of our hearts being pure, we are also called sons of the Lord God. For the sons of the Lord God, all the saints who cling to Him in faith, are justified by Him through faith. To be justified by Him is to be made right with Him. To be made right with our Lord God means there is no longer any breach between us and Him. We are at peace with the Lord God. Those who are at peace with the Lord God, who are called the sons of the Lord God, who are the saints of Him, share that peace with all those who are still at animosity with the Lord God, so that they also may receive such peace and be made sons of the Lord God. This is why the seventh quality of a saint is to be called a peacemaker, for in our compassion for the lost, we seek to bring that peace to all the nations; all those still lost in their sin and pride.

Unfortunately, in bringing this message of peace and forgiveness to an unbelieving world, the saints will endure persecution. Our Lord + Jesus lists two types of persecution that the saints endure: verbal persecution through the reproaching of the truth of the Word of the Lord God, and physical persecution, through martyrdom and torture. All the saints endure this eighth quality of being a saint. Some of the saints endure mockery and shame, just as our Lord + Jesus did on the tree of the holy cross, and throughout His earthly ministry. Some of the saints endure torture, pain, and death, as did most of the Apostles, who were sent out into the world by the Lord + Jesus to make of all nations saints of the Lord.

In all these qualities of the saints, our Lord + Jesus tells us we are blessed. We are blessed for the saints inherit a kingdom. The saints inherit an eternal kingdom in heaven. This is the promised inheritance that we have been given. We look forward to that day when we will be called out of this vale of tears into our eternal home in Heaven. There we will be truly blessed, for we will have shed the pain and misery of this life, we will have put off the chains and burdens of sin and death, and we be reunited with all of our loved ones who have already received their great reward. Therefore, my dear friends, let us give thanks on this Festival of All Saints, for we are truly blessed to be named among the saints. For we have heard the teachings of the Apostles and Prophets, the very teachings of our Lord + Jesus, and have believed them and continue to cling to them in faith. For they are our life and salvation. These teachings of the Apostles will lead us into the same eternal home where our dearly departed brothers and sisters—our fellow saints—now enjoy eternal bliss and glory. May the Lord God Almighty grant this unto us all. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Almighty God, be pleased to accompany Thy Word with Thy Holy Spirit and grant that Thy Word would increase faith in us; bring into the Way of Truth all such as have erred; turn the hearts of the unrepentant; and for sake of Thy Name grant succor to all heavy hearts and those who are heavy-laden, that they may through the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ be relieved and preserved so that they succumb not to the temptation of despair but rather that they gain the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil; through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria!