

**All Saints Day**  
Year A, Proper 26  
Matthew 5:1-12

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

"Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

"Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

"Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

## **Prayer**

Father, help us to live humbly, counting both our blessings and the costs we pay to live in this world. Help us to seek your will first, and to patiently, peacefully, work with others to build your Kingdom.

- **AMEN**

## **Sermon**

Matthew's familiar version of the Beatitudes <sup>i</sup> sounds so right.

So wise. So good.

God's way of showing us how to live the best possible life.

*"The glory of God is the human person, fully alive."* <sup>ii</sup>

Matthew wasn't an eyewitness to Jesus's Sermon on the Mount.<sup>iii</sup>

We don't know where Matthew was when he wrote his Gospel.<sup>iv</sup>

He wrote in Greek<sup>v</sup>,

based on eyewitness reports and gossip,

and from or what he had read<sup>vi</sup> in Aramaic or Hebrew.<sup>vii</sup>

Image Matthew sitting in a tavern somewhere,

A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away...

sipping a beer and writing his memoirs. <sup>viii</sup>

What he wrote about Jesus, still matters. *A lot.*

Matthew was a Hebrew, who didn't make an honest living,  
unlike Peter, the Fisherman<sup>ix</sup> and Paul, the tentmaker.  
Instead, Matthew collected taxes for the Romans<sup>x</sup>.

And he usually took a cut.

His own people thought of him as a dirt bag.

A more lonely and friendless<sup>xi</sup> life is hard to imagine!

But Jesus changed Matthew's heart.

Matthew wanted his (Jewish) readers to know  
that Jesus (of Nazareth) really was the Messiah  
they'd all been waiting for.<sup>xii</sup>

*Matthew wanted them to know that Jesus called his people<sup>xiii</sup>  
to take a critical look at their world and how they lived.*

*He wanted them to contrast their "real world" - 2,000 years ago-  
With Jesus' Kingdom.*

*And Mathew wanted them to know that Jesus expected  
them to build on Jesus' foundation.<sup>xiv</sup>*

"Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth", Jesus said.

That day will come. *But we aren't there yet.*<sup>xv</sup>

Jesus said that in His Kingdom, everyone will be treated decently.

Everyone will have a seat at the table.

That day will come. *But we aren't there yet.*

In Jesus' Kingdom, the rich and the poor will sit together.

The somebody's, and the nobody's. The old and the young. “

That day will come. *But we aren't there yet.*

Jesus preached the beatitudes , 2000 years ago.

But no one has ever quite reached them.

There is a sharp distinction, between the real world and  
the world that God has always wanted for us.

The world rewards aggression and wealth and titles,

But Jesus promised that poverty of spirit is its own reward.

The world encourages pride and possessions,

But Jesus would bless the meek.

The world lusts for fast, and plentiful, food and drink.

But Jesus blesses those who are hungry.

A long time ago I saw a TV commercial,

Reminding people not to throw trash out the car window.

I remember .... There's a car. Someone throws out a handful of litter.

The litter floats on the wind and lands, on a big pile of trash.

Then the camera shows the face of a Native American,

with a tear in his eye.

Yeah, I know that it's corny.

It might offend someone these days!

But it does give us a hint about what God prefers to see.

God watches as we zip around in our little metal boxes,

Burning up fossil fuels, and consuming our Mother Earth.

God watches as we impatiently burn up

the hours and minutes of our lives...with scarcely a 2<sup>nd</sup> thought.

*Blessed are those who mourn for a world and for lives*

*despoiled by sin and selfishness.*

Unless we work closely, with God and each other,

Not much is going to change.

Do you guys remember a comic called “Calvin and Hobbes”?

In one Calvin says, he’s bummed because

Each New Year ends up looking like the Old Year.

Year after year, everything’s still the same.

“There’s still pollution and war and stupidity and greed”, he says.

“I thought the future was supposed to be better.”

Hobbes agrees and says<sup>xvi</sup>,

“The problem with the future is that it keeps  
turning into the present.”<sup>xvii</sup>

*If we don’t listen to the Lord ...*

*If we don’t follow his advice,*

*the future will always look like the present.*

Without faith, the future feels uncertain.

In 1943, Janis Joplin was born in Port Arthur, Texas.

Not too long before she left planet earth behind,

She famously sang, “*Get it while you can*”.

*Even if Janis finally got it <sup>xviii</sup>, she still left it all behind. <sup>xix</sup>*

“The glory of God is the human person, fully alive.”

Like most of us caught in our human web,

Janis lived impulsively, in the moment... *until she didn't.*

*To live fully is to live for others, not for ourselves.*

2,000 years ago, Jesus told us how to find the balance we all seek:

“Live for God’s Kingdom”, “in the here and now.”

“Don’t live for yourself, but for each another.”

“The glory of God is the human person, fully alive.”

While a billion dollars are poured into political campaigns,

- God applauds the poor in spirit, and heals those who mourn.
- God favors the meek. God smiles upon the hungry.
- God honors the merciful. God honors the pure in heart.
- God loves the peacemakers. <sup>xx]</sup>

In the midst of today’s anxious chatter,

Each generation of Christian’s has the same job ...

Whoever we are. Wherever we are.

Whatever our creed or skin color or language:

*Each of us is called to accept God’s promise of a fuller life*

*And then to act on that promise .*

We are called to live in the present ... in the real world ...

Not as consumers -- Not as takers --

But as givers, and lovers and peacemakers.

“The glory of God is the human person, fully alive.”

We can't be that person alone. We can't do that alone.

God doesn't intend for us to.

God intends that we take Her hand,

and that we hold each other's hands<sup>xxi</sup>,

*and* only then, move forward in faith.

*Act in faith, together:*

- Pray for someone, every day for just two minutes.
- Pray with your family, for just five minutes every day.
- Volunteer one hour a week.
- Give one meal a week, to a homeless shelter.
- Peacefully engage the political world,  
for justice, as you understand it.

-AMEN

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<sup>i</sup> Did a guy named Matthew really write today's Gospel? People have been crediting him with that Gospel from the very beginning of the Jesus Movement. In fact, the earliest manuscripts, around 130 AD, begin saying "According to Matthew" ( τα Ματθαίως). Within 50 years of his death people everywhere in the Roman world were calling that Book "Matthew's Gospel."

<sup>ii</sup> Attributed to Sr. Irenaeus, 2<sup>nd</sup> Century.

<sup>iii</sup> Matthew probably wrote his Gospel, around 60 AD. Imagine that you wrote a short biography of a person that you felt was important, but never added a date or an address or a signature. Then imagine 2000 years from now someone is reading your short book, and trying to figure out how it came to be, and what it was so special that anyone bothered to preserve it.

<sup>iv</sup> But if I were writing it, I'd be sipping coffee, in some joint, on a little island West of Greece ... long before the summer tourist crowd showed up.

<sup>v</sup> The *lingua franca* of his day, for much business and commercial activity.

<sup>vi</sup> What would have been called "ta logia" τα λόγια, which in Greek means "the words".

<sup>vii</sup> Scholars say anyway.

<sup>viii</sup> The Hebrew and Aramaic stuff that he read about Jesus had to be interpreted into Greek. Many generations later it had to be interpreted into English and then for many of us, into American English.

<sup>ix</sup> Who was also called Levi.

<sup>x</sup> He was the son of Alphaeus... whoever that was!

<sup>xi</sup> Collecting commercial taxes for Herod Antipas, he may have been stationed on one of the main trade routes near Capernaum.

<sup>xii</sup> In fact, he mentioned the fulfillment, of the OT Messiah prophecy, 62 times.

<sup>xiii</sup> Initially only the Jews, but by the late 1<sup>st</sup> century, a culturally diverse sect referred to by some as "Christians".

<sup>xiv</sup> A lot of progress has been made, but we still make a lot of the same mistakes that people made 2000 years ago. Even though we've upgraded our technology, the human heart still needs work!

<sup>xv</sup> And I have a car payment to make. I need that new cell phone. Or that piece of pie.

<sup>xvi</sup> The "wise" person of those two.

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<sup>xvii</sup> But *cf*, this quote from Bill Watterson, Calvin and Hobbes creator. “Know what’s weird? Day by day, nothing seems to change. But pretty soon, everything’s different.”

<sup>xviii</sup> – which seems unlikely .

<sup>xix</sup> Rest in Peace.

<sup>xx</sup> ... however peace will eventually be made.

<sup>xxi</sup> In these COVID days, I mean this as a metaphor!