

Blessed Are We

All Saints Day
King of Glory Lutheran Church
Matthew 5:1-12
Pastor Ruth Ann Loughry

Living blessed is the joy of living as a fallen sinner/saint because of God in the midst of our broken world. We give thanks for the saints before us, the saints around us and the saints yet to come.

Matthew 5:1-12 ¹When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. ²Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

³“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

⁵“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

⁶“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

⁷“Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

⁸“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

⁹“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

¹⁰“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹“Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹²Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

On this All Saints Day, we gather in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, amen.

Perhaps Jesus might say it this way, this year....

Blessed are the essential workers, for they have saved lives and sat with the dying.

Blessed are the business owners, for they have struggled and felt downtrodden.

Blessed are the parents, for they have toiled to work and teach from home.

Blessed are those who drive, call, get groceries, and look for ways to share God’s light, for they are not forgotten.

Blessed are the people of color, for they are children of God.

Blessed are the firefighters, for they face death to save the living.

Blessed are the vaccine creators, for they fight an invisible enemy.

Blessed are the poor, for they remind us to be generous.

Blessed are those who pray, for they have no idea how God multiplies their whispered hopes.

Blessed are the sick and recovered, for they know again the value of health.

Blessed are the dead, for they have seen God face to face.

Blessed are we, in God who strengthens the weary, calms the anxious, guides the lost, forgives the sinner, comforts the grieving, and brings life everlasting.

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We are blessed in spite of and in the midst of this tragic year. 2020 has been a year when we have witnessed sin and death still very much alive in the world. As God's creation gets more complicated, as cells grow and mutate, as virus' pass through air, death has come to millions. Death has had a word with so many of God's beloved children. Human beings have condemned one another. Humankind has risen up in anger against hatred. Humans have risen up against skin color. Fires have wrought devastation and families have lost everything. Hurricanes are on the horizon. Wars still continue in places of our world and in the space of human hearts. Sin and death are very much alive in this world.

How can we possibly be blessed? How is that humanly possible? It isn't humanly possible. It is God-possible.

When Jesus taught on the mountain, He created a picture of God's creation in the midst of sin and death. In God's great reversals, a divine selfie of sorts, there exists a reality more true than what people were experiencing. Deeply embedded with the contrasts: death and life, poor and rich, powerful and powerless; Jesus said, "you are blessed." He did not say, 'You might be blessed' or 'you better start working on being blessed.' He said, "Now, in this moment, you are blessed."

For a first century Jew – think about that. Most are the working poor, Rome just increased taxes, no healthcare....how is life a blessing?

What does *blessed*, mean anyway? It can mean, happy. But not happy in 'la – dee –da what a beautiful day'! Not that kind of happy.

It can mean fortunate. But not fortunate, in that 'whew, that was lucky!' kind of sense.

It can mean joyful. But not ‘Yippee skippee, it’s a holiday! Let’s have fun.’ Not that kind of joyful.

Blessed means happy in the deepest sense of having been satisfied. Even though sin and death have a word, God has yet provided and is still providing. Our deepest emotional, spiritual and physical needs are being met. When we turn out the noise and tune into the Spirit, there is no question of being Blessed. Satisfied.

Blessed means fortunate in the sense that God is with us, right now, right here. We perceive God’s power at work. God does what humans cannot. A white person and a person of color have an authentic conversation after years of mistrust. An inmate has a conversion and comes to believe in God. God’s power doing what humans cannot. That’s blessed. Fortunate.

Blessed also means joyful in the sense that God sustains us in the middle of life’s messes and we know and feel God’s presence. Covid numbers are rising like we haven’t seen since spring. Yet we know without a doubt that God is real and right here; through negative or positive tests. Jesus said, “I am the life.” It’s His life living within us which fills us with joy. No matter what. That’s blessed.

He is the Life, you know. Jesus had His life and gave it up for us. But it wasn’t an easy road. He knew grief. He knew ridicule. He knew the weariness of crooked politics, and religion that knew not the depth He offered. Jesus died broken too.

Yet on that cross, we get a glimpse of why and how blessedness is complete. It’s complete in the suffering which leads to life.

The scriptures say it again and again and again that when we are weak and suffering, God is with us!

Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 12, "My (God’s) grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness." So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. ¹⁰Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong.”

Again in Romans 5, Paul says, “⁷Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person — though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. ⁸But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.”

While we were still sinners. While we were yet living in a state of sin and death, Jesus took all of that and conquered both once and for all. He took upon Himself the sin which we cannot escape and through His death and resurrection has made us forgiven saints. Blessed are we, sinful saints and saintly sinners.

Because of this, we are able to live deeply satisfied, immeasurably fortunate and even joyful in the face of the sin and death around us. Christ has died. Christ has risen. Christ will come again to redeem all the world.

Living blessed is a state of being which comes from being grounded in the only true source of our lives, God, Godself. That incarnate God, Jesus Christ, knew suffering and therefore knows our pain. Living blessed is not an irresponsible place, or naïve place. Living blessed is living each day with a living God in the midst of a fallen world full of sin and death with the life only God can offer.

On this day, we give thanks for all the lives of the saints – those living now fulfilling the work of building God's kingdom, all of you! We give thanks for the lives of the saints living in God's presence doing God's bidding in the eternal realm. Finally we give thanks for the saints yet to come; those who will be washed in the waters of grace, to work and will for God's ways.

Dearest brothers and sisters in Christ. Take hope! Have joy. Jesus proclaims us blessed this day as forgiven sinner saints. Amen!