

“All Saints Day”
Sermon Preached by Judith Rainforth
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I want to welcome you as we celebrate All Saints Sunday. It is a special time for all of us. You will notice that I am wearing white today. The paraments may not seem important to you, but I want to express how we have changed the colors during the liturgical year. White is important to us today. I hope you acknowledge that as you think of this white as symbolizing completeness and purity because that is what Jesus Christ has brought into our life so that we can one day be with the other saints that have gone before us.

Today I want to share with you a couple visuals. One is a certificate that has been framed. It is my father's, and I brought my mother's also. I hang these in my home and I remember them, not as one who doesn't have hope, but as one who celebrates that I was born into a large Christian family. My mother and father gave birth to seven children and they raised us all in the Lutheran traditions. This is my father's confirmation, he was born February 29, 1908, and he was confirmed April 30, 1922. He was born in Posen, Germany. His Bible verse was “Let us hold fast the profession of our faith, without wavering, for he is faithful that promise.” That is from Hebrew 10:23. Then, my mother's, this has an extra special meaning to me because the same pastor that confirmed her, confirmed me many years later. She was born December 2, 1914, and was confirmed on May 13, 1928. Her verse, which she held fast to was “Ye are bought with the price, therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God's.” That's from 1 Corinthians 6:20. I hope you remember your loved ones and that you continue to carry on their legacy of love as you celebrate the love of Jesus Christ. As we remember our loved ones and the saints that have gone before us, we can take comfort in the beatitudes that I have shared with you today in the Gospel.

Beatitude is a declaration of blessedness. We will make more sense of the word if we remember that the beatitudes Jesus spoke are how to be. Attitudes toward God, our neighbors and our opponents. Jesus spoke the beatitudes to disciples, they were people who already knew the way to heaven is through faith in Jesus Christ, not good works. That is important to remember because so many people think that the beatitudes teach us how to be saved, when they really illustrate how the saved are to be. In verse 3 Jesus began by saying that the saved are poor in spirit. He is not talking about the way we feel during this dark time of the Covid, political upheaval, or the protests, but the way a Christian thinks about their spiritual status before God. In fact, the root meaning of the word *poor* in Greek is *crouch*, the way a beggar does. A Christian is not a stand tall before God and brag about all the things they do for the church or community, all the money they give, or how wonderful they are and their position in life. That's not what God is calling us

to be. Instead, a Christian crouches and sometimes feels sad for all the missed opportunities to serve. In verse 4, Jesus says “A Christian is someone who mourns over sin.” When a Christian has been rude to a cashier, instead of blaming the cashier, they feel sad because of their impatience. As a spiritual beggar before God, Christians hunger for peace and justice. When we hear the words poor, beggar, mourners, hungry; Christians don’t sound like a very happy life, do they? But Jesus tells us in verse 4, “Such people will be comforted.” He says that “theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.” He promises that they will be filled. Jesus of course is speaking about the forgiveness of sin that he has want for us. That forgiveness comforts us and quiets a guilty conscience. It assures us that heaven is ours.

In verse 6 we can be sure that we have this forgiveness because Jesus says that he fills us with it. Jesus doesn’t do so sparingly, but abundantly so that our sins, no matter how large or how many they may seem, are all forgiven. People who know and believe that Jesus never rations forgiveness will reflect that truth in their attitude toward others. It will show by our kindness and our compassion.

Jesus went on to say in verse 7 that Christians are meek and merciful. We are to be like Jesus who did not lash back with those that spit on him at the time of his trial. Instead of seeking confrontation, we are to try to end it. Instead of escalating arguments, it says in verse 9, we are to cool them, for Jesus said, “Blessed are the peacemakers.” If we must have the last word in an argument, let it be “I’m sorry” or “I forgive you.”

Being meek of course does not mean being weak. Nor does Jesus want us to pursue peace at all costs. When the truth of God’s word is at stake, we need to be willing to suffer ridicule for the sake of the Gospel. When that ridicule comes, how are we to be toward our opponent? Jesus says in verse 12 to be joyful. He said we are to be exceedingly glad when we have to suffer for his name because it shows that we are on the same track as the believers in the Bible. For they too suffered for Jesus. It is this confidence that keeps us going, isn’t it? It is the promise of forgiveness and eternal life that makes us meek and merciful to our neighbors, and joyful in the midst of our opponents.

When we embrace this Gospel, we can rejoice as we celebrate All Saints Day, we know we will one day be reunited with all the saints that have gone before us. As we believe and our guaranteed eternal life because of the promises we hear in these beatitudes.

Amen and Alleluia!