

## **Blessed are You?**

Feast of All Saints, Year A

Revelation 7:2-17; 1 John 3: 1 – 3; Matthew 5: 1 – 12

November 1, 2020

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

Having been stuck at home, and in the hospital, this past month, I have come to value the presence of others. Especially, family. Family is familiar. The words even sound alike.

I am looking forward to Thanksgiving and Christmas. Holy days that I can spend with family, pestering nieces and nephews, sharing stories with siblings, and gleaning wisdom from my parents and grandparents.

However, unfortunately, like many of you, there will be empty chairs at these gatherings this year. It's been a hard year. I have yet to grieve my grandmother who passed last month. Of course, due to being ill, I was unable to be at the funeral. But, I have also not even watched the video of the funeral. I knew if I did, it would be difficult as the tears would come and, with my illness, I would struggle to breath.

So many Thanksgiving and Christmases where my grandmother fed us, loved us, nurtured us... It will be hard.

I only share my own grief, because I know many of you grieve as well. Mom won't be there in the kitchen. Dad won't be watching the game. Siblings who we won't get to share our life stories with. Grandparents, whose wisdom can no longer be gleaned.

This is the curse of this mortal life. This is what sin does to us. It steals, it robs, it rapes, and it kills. It takes all the beauty and precious things from us. Yet, even in the midst of all of this, God loves and cares for us.

Jesus, too, mourned the loss of His friend Lazarus. He mourned the loss of His cousin, John the Baptizer. Jesus experienced the empty chairs and family celebrations, as His step father, Joseph, disappeared from the Jesus' story.

Not only this, but our God has lost many whom He created. Many who have died outside of His love and care, because they rebelled against Him, denied Him, turned away His help and rescue. Many who have hated Him, because they do not understand the fallenness and brokenness of this world.

Isn't it wonderful, that here in our Gospel reading, we have the longest of Jesus' sermons? Jesus had just called His first disciples. He is teaching throughout Galilee. And, He is seeing the brokenness of humanity. They are bringing to Him their sick, demon possessed, paralytics, epileptics. And, then, St. Matthew goes straight into the sermon on the mount.

Jesus goes up on a hill, so that the people could hear him. And, probably, in typical Jewish fashion, He would sit down. For, in the ancient world, the teacher would sit, and the pupils would stand.

But, looking out at the crowd, I wonder if Jesus saw right into our hearts. Seeing the emptiness. The brokenness. The hurt. The fear. The anxiety. The shame. The depression. The grief...

Because, 'He opened His mouth and taught them, saying:

Blessed are the poor in spirit...

Blessed are those who mourn...

Blessed are the meek...

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness...

Blessed are the merciful...

Blessed are the pure in heart...

Blessed are the peacemakers...

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake...

Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you... on [His] account...'

I will tell you the same thing I've told others as I had struggled with COVID and the after effects. At one point, I wasn't sure I was going to die. And, no, I'm not being dramatic. It was a serious fear as I could not breathe, everything was growing dark, and I could not yell loud enough for my wife to hear me.

But, even with that, I've told people, that God has used every bit of it to draw me closer to Him. To remind me that I am mortal, "For dust I am, and to dust I will return." I have no control over my life. It can be snatched away at any moment. My breath, can be taken. My health can be taken. And, all I have left is my God and my Savior.

I don't have to like what He has allowed. I do not like being sick. I do not like feeling like I am truly going to die. I don't like my family being sick. I don't like losing my father-in-law or my grandmother. I don't like having a dear cousin in the hospital fighting for his life from an accidental gunshot. I don't like having to wear a mask everywhere I go. I don't any of it.

But, through it all my God has said, blessed are you.

And, friends, blessed are you, too. I know that each of you has been through much. Not the same things, but heavy, burdensome, weighty things. Some of you are going through them now. And, you don't like it. And, I don't blame you. It hurts. It's hard. It is painful.

Church Militant

But, you are blessed. I know you don't feel it, but that is a promise. Straight from your Lord and Savior.

*Now may the peace that passes all understanding, guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

*Amen.*