

Blessed Saints

The gospel for this coming Sunday (All Saints Sunday) is Matthew 5:1-12. This text is about the beatitudes.

Jesus introduces His Sermon on the Mount with nine beatitudes that detail the future blessedness of His disciples. These promised blessings are God's gracious gifts to those who repent of their sins and trust Christ for righteousness. Only after Jesus has assured His disciples of God's goodness to them does He call on them, in the rest of His sermon, to be good and do good. When we recognize our own spiritual poverty, when the Lord leads us to hunger and thirst for God's righteousness, when He makes us pure in heart so that we seek to worship only the true God, then we are blessed, now and forever.

His fame spread from north to south through the whole Holy Land, and even beyond its borders... His influence spread wider and wider; His holy teaching, His works of mercy, attracted crowds from every quarter. It seemed as if the whole world was going after Him, as if all Palestine would submit to His authority. It was not to be so, sunshine would give place to darkness, favor to persecution.

The exact location is uncertain. It may have been the gently sloping hillside at the northwest corner of the Sea of Galilee, not far from Capernaum. Mountains were common sites for significant events. I

"Disciples" denotes the men who have attached themselves to Jesus as their Master. Unlike the people of Jesus' day, they did not choose him but he chose them (John 15:16). Disciple always implies the existence of a personal attachment which shapes the whole life of the disciple. The basic meaning of the English noun "disciple" and is "learner." Essentially a disciple is one who accepts, learns from, and follows a teacher and his instruction. These were the twelve and also others(including us) who believed.

The first group of four blessings addresses Jesus' disciples in terms of their own innate emptiness (5:3-6). Left to themselves, apart from Christ, disciples (and all people) are "poor in spirit" and "lowly," given only to "mourning" and to "hungering." Jesus has come to reign over such persons in grace and mercy, "because" the promised end-time blessings will come to those who have nothing besides God-given faith in Jesus. He is the Servant of Yahweh, proclaiming Good News to the poor!

The second group of Beatitudes (5:7-12) still describes the disciples of Jesus: the merciful, the pure in heart, and so forth. These blessings testify that Jesus' call to discipleship begins to transform those who are called (5:7-12). When Jesus joins men, women, and children to himself, that union begins to manifest the life of Christ himself in the lives of his disciples. That was true for Jesus' original disciples there on the mountain in Galilee. It is also true for us today, who are baptized into union with Christ and who comprise his church, which hears and receives the Beatitudes in faith.

In the final beatitude, the disciple of Jesus will be like him in being Satan's target.

Jesus taught that the reward would be based on God's goodness, not the amount of work done (cf 20:1-15). Any reward our heavenly Father gives is an expression of His grace. We confess that eternal life is a reward; it is something due because of the promise, not because of our merits

Prayer: Gracious Savior, keep my eyes ever focused on you and your blessings, which are mine by grace alone. Amen. (TLSB)