

## All Saints Sunday

### FIRST READING – Revelation 7:9-17

**9** After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, **10** and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” **11** And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, **12** saying, “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.” **13** Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, “Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?” **14** I said to him, “Sir, you know.” And he said to me, “These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. **15** “Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the thr will shelter them with his presence. **16** They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. **17** For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

**7:9** *great multitude*.† Identified in v. 14 as those who have come out of the great tribulation described in ch. 6. (CSB)

Likely the 144,000 described in vv. 4-8. Later they are identified as believers who have survived “the great tribulation” (v. 14). (TLSB)

The second scene in this great interlude is in sharp contrast to the first. “After these things” (μετὰ ταῦτα) in 7:9 (cf. 4:1) indicates a fresh and new sight to be viewed, a sight that probably none on earth had ever been permitted and privileged to behold. The church militant on earth appeared as the 144,000. Though symbolic, this number suggests a much smaller crowd of people than the great host in heaven that is too numerous to count (7:9). In addition, the church militant on earth (as witnessed by the orderly arrangement of the twelve tribes) was prepared to march out in mission. In contrast, the great multitude of people before the heavenly throne of God is at rest and peace, celebrating the results of the mission of the church on earth. As the 144,000 stand poised to be launched out into a world of turmoil and suffering, they are quite aware of the peril they face, though they are confident of God’s sealing protection. But the church triumphant, at rest and peace and awaiting the final act of God’s judgment and the resurrection at the End, will never again experience tribulation and persecution on earth. For them the latter part of Paul’s words has come true, “I reckon that the sufferings of this present time cannot be compared to the glory that shall be revealed to us” (Rom 8:18). (CC pp. 193)

The crowd of people before the throne of God is *countless*. This may have reminded John of the promise made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that their descendants would be beyond counting—as numerous as the sand of the seashore and as the stars in the heavens (Gen. 15:5; 22:17; 26:4; 32:12; cf. Heb. 11:12) And this crowd standing before God’s throne is not only from the ethnic people of Israel, but from every ethnic group of people on earth. Certainly this demonstrates that the true Israel of God, represented on earth by the 144,000 and in heaven by this countless crowd before God’s throne, is all those who have the same faith as Abraham, both Jews and Gentiles. That faith alone justifies, the faith in the faithfulness of Jesus Christ (Rom 3:21–31; 9:7–8, 30–31). (CC p. 193)

“A great multitude . . . from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages” refers to all believers in Christ in the Church Triumphant. Vv 9–17 deal with the Church Triumphant just as vv 2–8

deal with the Church Militant and, more precisely, how God treats each. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

*every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages.* All four are mentioned together also in 5:9; 11:9; 13:7; 14:6. Cf. 10:11; 17:15, in which one of the four is changed. (CSB)

*white robes* – The great crowd is *arrayed in white robes*. This is the third time that John sees heavenly figures dressed in white robes. The first time was the twenty-four elders sitting on thrones around God’s heavenly throne (4:4). The second was the souls of the martyrs beneath the incense altar in heaven, to whom were given white garments (6:11). And now again John sees heavenly figures so clothed. In addition two earlier references mention people *on earth* wearing white or white robes. In 3:4–5 and 3:18, in the fifth and seventh letters, members of these two particular churches wear white garments; they are those who remained faithful to their Lord. In these two references God’s saints *on earth* are referred to as wearing white. Here in 7:9 (as in 4:4 and 6:11), those who are so dressed are before God *in heaven*. As in the instances of the elders and the martyrs, the white robes here in 7:9 symbolize the purity and righteousness of Christ, which purity and righteousness have been given to his people because of his blood (7:14). (CC p. 193)

*palm branches.* † Used for festive occasions (see Lev 23:40; Jn 12:13) and as symbols of victory in Greek literature. (CSB)

Symbol of victory. They were displayed when victorious kings were welcomed, most famously when Jesus entered Jerusalem. (TLSB)

The heavenly crowd is also *carrying palm branches* in their hands. Palm branches appear only twice in the entire NT, here in Rev 7:9 and in Jn 12:13. This is the first time that John sees heavenly figures with palms, though Jewish tradition about palm branches goes back to the OT. (CC pp. 194-195)

Palm trees were quite prevalent in the Near East, even in oases in desert regions (Ex 15:27). The city of Jericho is frequently described as the “city of palms.” (Deut. 34:3; Judg. 1:16; 3:13; 2 Chr. 28:15) Deborah held court underneath a palm tree (Judg 4:5). Solomon’s temple had palm trees carved on the walls and doors (1 Ki. 6:29, 32-35; 2 Chr. 3:5; cf. 1 Ki. 7:36). Because of the abundance of palm trees in the Near East, they had many uses, especially in decorative applications, as in Solomon’s temple and in the visionary temple of Ezekiel (Ezek. 40:16,22, 26; 41:17-18, 25-26). They were also used in figurative language, as in Ps 92:12 (MT 92:13), “the righteous will flourish like the palm tree.” In Song 7:7 (MT 7:8) the bearing or stature of a beautiful woman is likened to a palm tree. (CC pp. 194-195)

But it is with their use in sacred rites or symbols that is of most interest. For example, in the ancient Near East the palm tree often appears in artistic form as the tree of life on cylinder seals. In the OT palm branches are associated with the Feast of Booths or Tabernacles (Lev 23:40; Neh 8:13–17). In Jewish celebrations, as when Simon Maccabaeus delivered Jerusalem from the pagan enemy, palm branches were used in the victory celebration. In 2 Macc 10:5–8 palm branches were carried at the celebration of the purification of the temple; the people were thus reminded of the Feast of Tabernacles (10:6). (CC pp. 194-195)

John would have been aware of this tradition. As he reflected on the sight of the palm branches, he may have thought of the crowd that went out to meet Jesus as the King rode *triumphantly* into Jerusalem (Jn 12:12–13). Whatever their thoughts or the motivation of their actions, including their waving of the palm branches, they were consciously taking part in a celebration. A celebration of a triumphal entry of a king? A celebration of rejoicing over a promised deliverance? A celebration of a rededication of the temple?

With the palm branches they were participating in a godly reception of the promised King, the Son of David, who would cleanse the temple (Jn. 12:13-15; cf. Mt. 21:9, 12-13; Mk. 11:9-10). (CC pp. 194-195)

Now John sees again palm branches in the hands of celebrants. Only this time the crowd is much larger, and a host of people from every nation is in heaven before God. As Morris states in connection with Jn 12:13, “Palms were an emblem of victory, and in John’s mention of them here we must detect a reference to the triumph of Christ.” *John now views the result of Christ’s triumphal victory on earth: a host waving palm branches in heaven.* (CC pp. 194-195)

**7:10-12** God’s Church Triumphant shouts a hymn of praise to God and the Lamb, to whom they attribute their salvation. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

**7:10** *Salvation belongs to our God.* See Ge 49:18 (“deliverance”); Jn 2:9. (CSB)

The “Hosanna!” cried on Palm Sunday means “Now save us.” In this vision, salvation is acclaimed as an accomplished fact. (TLSB)

John hears the multitude shouting a *hymn of praise* in which God’s people attribute their salvation (σωτηρία) to God and to the Lamb (7:10). No greater praise can be given to God than that his creatures attribute their salvation to him and to his Christ (cf. 5:9–14). This hymn of praise for salvation is a new stanza to the great Te Deum begun in 4:8. In the glorious vision of God’s throne in heaven and of the enthronement of the Lamb in Revelation 4–5, the heavenly host added new stanzas of praise to the Te Deum, a stanza giving glory to God for creating all things (4:11); two stanzas lauding the Lamb for the salvation purchased by his blood (5:9–10 and 5:12); and another stanza extolling both God and the Lamb (5:13). Similarly now in 7:10 a great heavenly crowd adds yet another stanza in praise of God and the Lamb for their salvation. Their voice was a great shout of praise which can be imagined to have shaken the rafters of God’s heavenly tabernacle. And as John hears the large crowd thus crying out their stanza of praise, he most likely thought of the twenty-four elders and the four winged creatures and their stanza of praise to the Lamb, in which they exclaimed how the Lamb had purchased for God a people “from every tribe and tongue and people and nation” (5:9). Is this that same redeemed people from all nations now standing before God in heaven which John sees in 7:9–10? For they are a people “out of every nation and tribes and peoples and tongues” (7:9). The same words are used to describe the diverse people in 5:9 and 7:9, though in a slightly different order. (CC p. 195)

**7:11** *elders.* See note on 4:4. (CSB)

*four living creatures.* See note on 4:6. (CSB)

**WORSHIPED GOD** – As in the vision of God’s heavenly throne and the coronation of the Lamb (Revelation 4–5), so also here in Revelation 7 all the angels around the twenty-four elders and the four winged creatures hymn a stanza of praise (5:11–12; 7:11–12). And similar to the stanza in 5:13, sung by “all creation,” “[all] the blessing and the glory and the wisdom and the thanksgiving and the honor and the power and the strength” are ascribed to God (7:12). But here the stanza of praise is given only to God the Father. Why is the Lamb not also the object of the praise, as he is together with God in 5:13? Perhaps the reason is that here we can imagine him presenting this great crowd (7:9), washed in his shed blood (7:14), to his heavenly Father. For as their Shepherd he now leads them to the “fountains of the waters of life” before God in heaven (7:17). However this is interpreted, the heavenly Father is singled out as the object of the heavenly host’s praise, for he as their Creator is the source of the salvation of his people through the blood of the Lamb. He sent the Shepherd to the earth to gather his people (Jn 10:14–18, 27–30). Now the Shepherd, as the victorious Lamb (Rev 5:9–10), presents the flock to his heavenly Father. At the end of the stanza of praise by the angels to God, as at its beginning, “amen” (ἀμήν) is spoken

(7:12). In 5:14 the four winged creatures spoke it. Here in 7:12 “amen” is spoken by the host of angels at the end of their stanza of praise. (CC pp. 195-196)

**7:12 blessing...power.** The sevenfold list of attributes expresses complete or perfect praise (see note on 5:12). (CSB)

The company of heaven repeats their refrain (cf. 4:11). (TLSB)

It is worth emphasizing here that it is *the angels* who sing to their God and Creator this hymn of praise (7:12). In 5:12 the host of angels around the throne of God and around the four winged creatures and around the twenty-four elders also sang the praises of the Lamb because of his victory for God and his people (see also 5:9–10). Now here the angels around the throne and around the winged creatures and elders again sing a hymn of praise, but this time to God the Father (7:11–12). This great Te Deum, begun in 4:8 by the four winged creatures, has stanzas throughout Revelation. Some are sung by angels, some by the saints of God, and some by the whole heavenly host. One can imagine this heavenly choir of God singing the Te Deum antiphonally, stanza by stanza. The angels praise God and the Lamb for the salvation of human beings; they praise God for rescuing a fallen humanity through his Son, who is also their Lord. There comes to mind the praise of the angels at the birth of Christ (Lk 2:13–14). What does this all mean, this praise of God in which the angels give thanks because God’s people are brought back to him? Certainly it suggests that the angels praise God for his every action. *But in particular it points out that the redemption of God’s people in Christ is the most important action since his creation of all life.* The glory of God’s grace moves his angels to rejoice in this great mystery (Eph. 3:8-12; Col. 1:26-27; 1 Tim. 3:16; 1 Pet. 1:10-12). (CC p. 196)

**7:13-14** The “great tribulation” is the worst of the tribulations all Christians experience throughout history for the sake of the Gospel, which will take place immediately before Christ’s second coming; it will be cut short for the sake of God’s people, and it includes all tribulations Christians go through at all times in history for the sake of faithfulness to God’s Word. The Church revealed to John here is the entire Church of God as it will appear on Judgment Day. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

**7:13 white robes.** One of the twenty-four elders asks John, “These who are clothed about with white robes, who are they?” (7:13). Of course the elder himself knows, for he, together with the other twenty-three, represents all the saints before God’s heavenly throne (4:4). One would have expected John to have asked the question. The perfect tense (εἶρηκα, “I say,” 7:14) may indicate that John had indeed already asked the question, but to himself. He was perhaps so awe-struck by the appearance of the great crowd in heaven that he had said to himself, “Who are these?” The elder then sensing John’s private wonder asked the question for him in 7:13. John responded, “My lord, you—you know” (7:14). The elder not only asked John who this great crowd was, but also, “whence have they come?” (7:13). When John saw in Revelation 4–5 the vision of God’s heavenly glory and the enthronement of the Lamb, he beheld the elders and the winged creatures as well as the thousands of angels, but he did not see a multitude of people. So in chapter 7 he evidently was wondering not only who they were but also from where they came. The elder included this in his question to John, as if John had asked, “From where did these people come, for I did not see them before?” (CC pp. 196-197)

An elder, and not an angel, attends John in this vision of the saints in heaven. This is the second and final time that an elder stands with John as he looks at a vision or a scene within a vision and helps interpret it for him. The first time that an elder thus attended John in a vision was in 5:5, when he served John by pointing out to him the victorious Lamb. Both in 5:5 and now here in 7:13 the scene or vision has to do very pointedly with the victory of the Lamb *for the purpose of God’s people*. So in both instances God gives to one of the elders, *representatives of God’s people*, the honor of attending John as he views the

scenes. All the other times throughout Revelation it is an angel, or angels, who accompanies John to help him interpret and understand the visions and their scenes. (CC pp. 196-197)

**7:14** *the great tribulation.*† Described in ch. 6. No passage of Scripture teaches that the church will be “raptured” out of this world for seven years. Jesus also spoke of great distress in connection with the destruction of Jerusalem and the final destruction of the world (Mt 24:15–28). Nowhere in Scripture are the words “great tribulation” used in connection with a reference to “seven years.” (CSB)

Because John’s vision includes the faithful from every nation and every time, it is appropriate to see those who yet live faithfully here on earth as part of that gathering. In fact, when Christians gather for worship in this world, they may be understood as participating by faith in the ongoing heavenly praise. (TLSB)

In answer to the question of the identity of the crowd and its origin, the elder states, “These are those who are coming out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (7:14). John had already observed the tribulations and the horror caused by the four horsemen (6:1–8), and he had seen the souls of the martyred saints in heaven praying to God for vengeance, which vengeance would come only after their brothers and sisters had endured the horror of the same persecutions and sufferings (6:9–11). Are the things described in Revelation 6 “the great tribulation” (ἡ θλίψις ἡ μεγάλη) that the elder speaks about here in 7:14? (CC pp. 197-199)

Elsewhere Revelation pictures tribulation as a continuing reality for all Christians. In 1:9, at the beginning of John’s description of how the exalted Christ commissioned him to write Revelation (1:9–20), John states that he was sharing “in the suffering/tribulation” (ἐν τῇ θλίψει) that other Christians were experiencing at that time (1:9). Certainly his exile to the island of Patmos was a part of that tribulation. John had likely suffered other forms of persecutions and tribulations in his long life of witness to Christ. He was not unfamiliar with hardship; his own brother James had suffered martyrdom (Acts 12:1–2). In one of the letters to the seven churches, the Lord Christ acknowledged that his people on earth were and would continue to experience “suffering/tribulation” (θλίψις), part of which was the suffering of persecution and imprisonment (Rev 2:9–10). But these tribulations were not described as “the *great* tribulation” (ἡ θλίψις ἡ μεγάλη as in 7:14). Christians of all ages are always suffering tribulations of one kind or another, including persecutions. In encouraging the Christians in Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, Paul once stated that “through *many tribulations* [διὰ πολλῶν θλίψεων] it is necessary for us to enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22; cf. Jn 15:20; 2 Tim 3:12). (CC pp. 197-199)

*The fact that the tribulation here in Rev 7:14 is called “great” (μεγάλη) seems to indicate that it is the worst of the common tribulations that all Christians in general experience throughout history. The “great tribulation” is the time toward the end of the “thousand years” (the millennium, which is the NT church age) when Satan will be let loose for a short time (20:7). (CC pp. 197-199)*

In Mt 24:15–31 (cf. Mk 13:14–27; Lk 21:20–28) Jesus describes the terrifying days before the end of this present world, and before his second coming, in which he says that there would be a “great tribulation” (θλίψις μεγάλη) as had never been experienced before since the beginning of the world’s existence (Mt 24:21). This “great tribulation” would be so horrible that even God’s own elect would not be saved unless those horrific days were cut short for their sake (Mt 24:22). And the Lord Christ said (Mt 24:15) these last days of this “great tribulation” would be introduced by the “abomination of desolation” (τὸ βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως) prophesied by Daniel (Dan. 9:27; 11:31; 12:11; cf. 1 Macc. 1:54; 6:7). Jesus’ discourse concerning the sufferings of the last days before his second coming is concluded with these words (Mt 24:29–30): (CC pp. 197-199)

And immediately after the tribulation of those days [εὐθέως δὲ μετὰ τὴν θλίψιν τῶν ἡμερῶν ἐκείνων], the sun will be darkened and the moon will no longer give its light and the stars will fall

from heaven and the powers [δυνάμεις] of the heavens will be shaken, and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven [καὶ τότε φανήσεται τὸ σημεῖον τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐν οὐρανῶ], and then all the tribes of the earth will wail and they will see the Son of Man [καὶ ὄψονται τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου] coming on the clouds of heaven with great power and glory.

The evil days *immediately before Christ's second coming*, together with their sufferings and persecutions, are called the “great tribulation” (θλίψις μεγάλη, Mt 24:21) and “the tribulation of those days” (τὴν θλίψιν τῶν ἡμερῶν ἐκείνων, Mt 24:29). (CC pp. 197-199)

Is the “great tribulation” of Mt 24:15–31 the same as that of which the elder speaks in Rev 7:14? It certainly seems so, for the Lord’s words in Matthew locate the “great tribulation” in a sequence of historical events leading up to the return of Christ at the End (cf. ὅταν, “when,” Mt 24:15; εὐθέως, “immediately,” Mt 24:29). However, the elder’s words in Rev 7:14 (especially the present participle ἐρχόμενοι in the phrase “those who *are coming* out of the great tribulation”) also suggest that the picture here is of a condition out of which all the saints are being delivered, not only through the “great tribulation” just before the End, but also through tribulations throughout the whole time period covered by the prophetic message of Revelation. (CC pp. 197-199)

Thus this vision of the church triumphant has a message of comfort for all Christians, including those who go through death long before the “great tribulation” at the End. Since every Christian experiences testings of faith and witness, every such trial points to the future “great tribulation” at the End and becomes at that moment in time existentially a great tribulation for that believer. For example, when Jesus describes the last days before his second coming as the “great tribulation,” he speaks also of the destruction of the temple and the evil days of suffering preceding it (Mt 24:1–14). Jesus uses the word “tribulation” (θλίψις) in referring to those days of sufferings and persecutions which the residents of Jerusalem and Judea would endure. The foretelling of the destruction of the temple and of Jerusalem, and the preceding days of tribulation, while serving as an admonition *then*, serve in turn also as a *prophetic type* of the end of this world and of the days of the “great tribulation,” which will come right before the End. Immediately following Jesus’ warning about the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple is his discourse about the last days of the “great tribulation” and his second coming at the End (Mt 24:15–31). It is evident that, *for the people of Judea and Jerusalem*, their sufferings preceding the fall of the city in A.D. 70 were their “great tribulation” before the end of their lives in the holy city. (CC pp. 197-199)

*The picture of eternal glory of Rev 7:14 is for the comfort of all Christians of all times as they experience whatever tribulations sorely test their faith and patience.* Some tribulations and sufferings will be so piercing and poignant that the very faith and foundation of the believer’s hope will be severely tried, almost to the point of despair and defeat. For that Christian at that moment, his sufferings and trials are his great tribulation. And every Christian will experience tribulation. (CC pp. 197-199)

*white in the blood* – White is the color of purity, and Christ’s people are purified by His blood shed for them. (TLSB)

The people in the great crowd which John sees before the throne of God in heaven have already experienced “the great tribulation” (7:14) and have come out of it. The present participle in the phrase οἱ ἐρχόμενοι ἐκ, “those who are coming out” (7:14), suggests that Christians are continually emerging from this tribulation, adding to the crowd in heaven. *John is looking at the whole people of God entering and becoming the church triumphant. The crowd that John sees represents the whole church as if it were already triumphant, as if it were already complete, as it will be at the resurrection at the End* (Cf. Rev. 6:9-11; 14:1-6; 15:2-4; 20:11-15; chapter 21). In contrast, the souls of those who had been martyred, which John saw in heaven at the foot of the incense altar, were not yet complete in number (6:9–11). Also only their “souls” (6:9) were mentioned, which implied that the resurrection of the body had not yet taken

place, while in 7:9–17 no such differentiation between body and soul is made concerning the great crowd before God’s heavenly throne. This suggests that the great crowd of the church triumphant is complete in number, but uncountable. *John is looking at the church in its eschatological state*, which state the souls of all Christians enter the moment of their death and which is consummated at the resurrection of the body at the End. (CC pp. 199-201)

The crowd of saints comes out of the great tribulation victorious because of *the blood of the Lamb* (cf. 15:2–4). They had “washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (7:14). Because of the redeeming death of Jesus Christ and because he now as the victorious Lamb presents them to the heavenly Father, the crowd of people stands pure and holy in the presence of God (cf. Rom 3:21–26; Heb 4:14–16). With sins forgiven by the blood of Christ (1 Jn 1:7–9; 2:1–2), and covered now with the righteousness of the Lamb (Rom 3:22; 10:4), they share in the victory of the Lamb before the heavenly Father. The *active* Greek verbs “washed” and “made ... white” (7:14) with the people as the subject suggest that the saints did the washing. They were the recipients of God’s grace, with the result that as they held to Christ in repentance and faith, they “washed” their garments and “made them white” in his blood by means of Word and Sacrament (Mt. 26:27-28; Acts 2:38-39; 22:16; Rom. 10:14-17). Yet there is no contradiction between passages that speak of Christians washing their robes (active forms of πλύνω in 7:14; 22:14) and those that refer to Christians washing themselves or being washed. Since salvation is by grace alone, it is impossible for a person to wash himself or his clothes so as to (actively) achieve the forgiveness of sins (e.g., Jer 2:22; Job 9:30–31). God alone can turn scarlet sins to “white” (Is 1:18). God must wash the sinner clean from sin (e.g., Ps 51:2, 7 [MT 51:4, 9]; Is 4:4), as confirmed by the baptismal language about God’s “washing” of his church (the verbal noun λουτρόν in Eph 5:26; Titus 3:5). Therefore when God calls for people to wash themselves clean from sin (Is 1:16) or “be baptized and wash away your sins” (Acts 22:16), and when Christians are described as having washed their robes (Rev 7:14; 22:14), it is always with the theological understanding that God is the one who instills the desire, prompts the action (Phil 2:13), and accomplishes the result: forgiven sins and eternal glory. (CC pp. 199-201)

**7:15–17†** The perfect bliss of the heavenly host is described in a series of 10 statements. The first three lines of the poem describe the blessedness of believers in the presence of God. The next four lines depict the freedom of God’s people from the effects of sin. The last three lines give the source of their bliss: the Lord will shepherd them to the water of life (cf. Jn 4:14). (CSB)

**7:15** *serve* – Greek latreuo, a verb associated with worship and religious service. (TLSB)

The crowd of saints shares in the heavenly celebration of the victorious Lamb (cf. Rev 5:8–10). As they stand before the throne of God, “they worship him day and night” (7:15). As the four winged creatures “do not cease, day and night,” singing the Trisagion (ἅγιος ἅγιος ἅγιος) of the great Te Deum (4:8), so now the saints of God continually participate in the heavenly worship. Certainly a part of that worship includes their joining the winged creatures and the elders and all the angelic host in the singing of that glorious Te Deum, as is attested by their shout, “Salvation is with our God” (7:10). However, here their worship is noted but not described in any detail. Rather, their relationship to God and the Lamb is emphasized. (CC p. 201)

*temple*. All 16 references to the temple in Revelation use the word that designates the inner shrine rather than the larger precincts. It is the place where God’s presence dwells. (CSB)

*will shelter them*. The imagery would evoke memories of the tabernacle in the desert (Lev 26:11–13). (CSB)

σκηνώσει—In classical Greek this literally meant “to pitch a tent, to encamp, to live or dwell in a tent.” As time went on it began to be used for dwelling in any kind of lodging. The noun σκηνή was thus used to refer to a “tent,” and then also to any kind of an “abode.” The LXX uses σκηνή for both תִּשְׁבּוּ and לָחָא when they refer specifically to the tabernacle that Moses was instructed to erect so that God would have a dwelling and sanctuary among his people Israel (e.g., for תִּשְׁבּוּ in Ex 25:9; 26:1, 13; for לָחָא in Ex 26:9, 12, 13; cf. Heb 8:2–5; 9:2–21). While σκηνή, the noun, appears regularly throughout the LXX, the verb, σκηνώω, is used very little. An example is in LXX 3 Kingdoms 8:12–13 (MT/ET 1 Ki 8:12–13), where Solomon mentions how the Lord had said that he would “live, dwell” (τοῦ σκηνώσαι) in darkness, but Solomon had now built a royal house or temple (οἶκος, translating תֵּבֵן) for God’s everlasting dwelling place (ἔδρασμα τῆ καθέδρα). (CC p. 179)

The one who sits upon the throne “will spread his tent over them” (7:15). The verb σκηνώω (“pitch a tent,” “live/dwell in a tent”) points to an earthly dwelling, a dwelling in which people share the intimacy of family living. In biblical literature it carries an incarnational idea of God living in an earthly form or abode that can be experienced through the senses. In Jn 1:14, when the Logos (λόγος) became flesh (σάρξ), he “tabernacled” or “tented” (ἐσκήνωσεν) among God’s people. The verb emphasizes a familial, intimate dwelling together in an earthly sense. Even when it is used of those now in heaven dwelling with God (Rev 12:12; 13:6) and the emphasis is on the familial, intimate manner of living together, the earthly, sensory connotation is not totally lacking. It could be that, in using this word, God is condescending to our human understanding of existence and manner of speaking. But more likely, the word is used to direct attention to the fact that God’s people, considered in their eschatological existence, raised from the dead, will live intimately *in the flesh* with God in the new heaven and new earth (21:3), and in a familial, intimate way, he will dwell with them sensately, that is, in a manner that can be experienced also with the human senses (see 1 Jn 1:1–3). The future tense of the verb emphasizes the “not yet” aspect of this promise. *Now* this is understood and experienced only through the mind and eyes of faith, but *then, after the resurrection*, it will be a sensory reality (see Job 19:25–27; 2 Cor 5:1–5; cf. 2 Pet 1:13–15). Here in Rev 7:15 John is assured that God will dwell with his saints who have come out of the great tribulation. God dwells with them forever in a manner that is in keeping with what Jn 1:14 reveals: the Word became flesh and came to dwell among us in the person of Jesus Christ. (CC pp. 201-202)

**7:16** *they will hunger no more, neither thirst anymore, the sun shall not strike them* – Because God will tent among his saints in heaven, “they will never again hunger nor ever again thirst” (Rev 7:16). This description and those which follow are to be received in an eschatological, incarnational sense. The state of existence that is being described, though true now for all the saints before God’s heavenly presence as “souls” (6:9), will reach its final and full meaning *at the resurrection of the body in the new heaven and new earth*. For example, in describing life with God in the new heaven and earth, John says that every tear will be wiped from the eyes of God’s people (21:4), and all who are thirsty will drink from the fountain of living water (21:6). While Revelation 21 does not explicitly speak of never again being hungry nor thirsty, it does say that in the new heaven and earth there shall never again be any pain or sorrow or death (21:4). Again, while all this is understood as true *now for the souls* of God’s people with him in his heavenly presence, it finds its final and complete meaning *after the resurrection of the body* in the eternal life with God in the new heaven and earth. (CC pp. 202-203)

Though 7:16 describes the blessed state of existence as the *absence* of physical traumas, it touches the very core of natural human life and needs. Hunger, thirst, and burning, scorching heat are especially applicable to living in a desert-like wilderness as the children of Israel did (Ex 16:1–3; 17:1; cf. Rev 12:6). They are, nevertheless, woes common to all life in this fallen world. These words of Rev 7:16 call to mind the promise that God gave through Isaiah (49:8–10). God said to his people that in the day of his salvation he would help them and restore them to their land. When that happened they would not hunger nor thirst, nor would the heat of the desert or the sun smite them (Is 49:10). What John heard in Rev 7:16 may have reminded him of the manna in the wilderness and the miraculous way God provided water (Ex



16:4–5; 17:3–7). It also may have evoked his memory of Jesus feeding the five thousand (Jn 6:1–15). And John must have remembered the words of Jesus to the woman at Jacob’s well that whoever drinks the water he gives will never thirst again (Jn 4:7–15). Jesus also said that because he is the bread of life, whoever comes to him will never hunger again, and whoever believes in him will never thirst again (Jn 6:35). (CC pp. 202-203)

As John reflected on what he had heard in Rev 7:16 and related it to such words and deeds of the Lord, he must have been comforted with this thought: God always keeps his promises. *For John now sees and hears the final end of God’s promise concerning his people.* Now in their existence as “souls” (6:9) in heaven before God and the Lamb, and in his vision of the future final fulfillment after the resurrection of the body in the new heaven and earth, John sees God’s people at rest, never again to be pained by the harshness of life as they formerly experienced it in their earthly existence. For in their new life with God—now before his heavenly throne and then in the new heaven and earth—the Lamb “will shepherd them, and he will lead them to fountains of the waters of life” (7:17; cf. 21:6). (CC pp. 202-203)

Images recall Israel’s wilderness wanderings and the hardships of the Church’s earthly pilgrimage. It anticipates a peaceful existence without the hardships of this fallen world. (TLSB)

**7:17 shepherd.** Ancient kings often referred to themselves as the shepherds of their people. (CSB)

Before his death and resurrection Jesus had identified himself as the Good Shepherd (Jn 10:11–14). In the OT Yahweh had promised his people that like a shepherd he would look after them in order to rescue them and care for them (Ezek. 34:11-16; cf. Ps. 28:8-9; 78:52; 80:1 {MT 80:2}; Jer 31:10-11; Micah 7:14). In order to carry out this word, God then promised to provide his people with a shepherd who would tend them. This promised shepherd would be his servant, a new David (Ezek. 34:23-24; cf. Is. 40:9-11; Ps. 78:70-72). According to Jesus’ own words, Jesus himself is this servant, this David (Mk. 12:35-37; cf. Mt. 1:1; 15:21-22; Rom. 1:3; 2 Tim. 2:8). It was also well known at the time of Jesus’ earthly ministry that the Messiah would be born at Bethlehem from the seed of David (2 Sam. 7:11-12; Ps. 89:3-4 {MT 89:4-5}; Micah 5:2 {MT 5:1}; Mt. 2:5-6; Jn. 7:40-42). The relationship between God and his people, as pictured by his being their shepherd, was revealed so beautifully in the twenty-third psalm. In this psalm, as the psalmist declares that Yahweh is his shepherd, he says that his Lord will lead him to “quiet waters” and thus restore his soul (Ps 23:2–3). Now in Rev 7:17 John sees and hears the final outcome of these promises in the OT and of the Lord Christ himself. The shepherd of Yahweh has now been provided. By his death and resurrection, the servant David has rescued God’s people (5:5–6). And as their Good Shepherd he tends the flock, caring for them and leading them through “the great tribulation” (7:14) to the quiet waters of eternal life—already now on earth, then in heaven with God, and finally forever in the new heaven and new earth. (CC p. 203)

*springs of living water* – Jesus spoke of this gift during His earthly ministry (cf. John 7:37-38). Note that whereas v. 16 describes heaven as being devoid of anguish, this verse describes heaven in positive terms. Luther: “While worms and rotteness are before our eyes, we cannot be unmindful of them, nevertheless there will be a time when God will wipe away every tear, as is stated in this verse. Therefore faith should begin to forget tears and dishonor which is does not see. Although the eyes see the rotteness, the ears hear the complaints and sobs, and the noses smell the stench of the corpses, nevertheless it is the part of faith to say ‘I do not know this. I see nothing. Indeed, I see a multiplication and a brightness surpassing the sun itself and the stars.’ Therefore, such examples are set before us in order that we may learn that God is the Creator of all things, restores the dead to life and glorifies worms and the foulest rotteness. And He wants this to be acknowledged and celebrated by us in this life of faith. Later, however, in the future life, we shall experience it in actual fact” (AE 7:210-211). (TLSB)

“Fountains of the waters of life” (7:17) is an expression for the source of life. God himself is that source of life (Ps 36:9 [MT 36:10]; cf. Rev 21:5–6). Jesus Christ leads the flock to God for the gift of life. For as God the Father has life in himself, he has also given to his Son to have life in himself (Jn 1:4; 5:26). In order to give the gift of life to God’s people, the shepherd laid down his life for the sheep (Jn 10:11). And in his resurrection he received his life back (Jn 10:17–18) so as to lead his followers to God, the ultimate source of life. (CC p. 203)

*wipe away every tear* – A final truth describes the rest and the peace of the crowd of saints before God’s throne in heaven: “God will wipe every tear from their eyes” (Rev 7:17). Tears and laments are part of the experience and character of the faithful people of God while on this earth. Tears are shed over one’s sins and the sins of others (Is 22:4; Pss 6:6; 39:12 [MT 6:7; 39:13]), over the ruin and sufferings experienced by others (Jer 9:1, 18 [MT 8:23; 9:17]; 13:17), over one’s own afflictions (Job 16:16; 30:31), when confronted with God’s anger (Ps 80:5 [MT 80:6]), when alone and in sorrow (Ps 102:9 [MT 102:10]). In the OT David mourned over the death of Absalom and would not be comforted (2 Sam 18:33–19:4). Rachel in Ramah wept over her children (Jer 31:15; cf. Mt 2:16–18). In the NT we are told that Mary shed tears at the death of her brother Lazarus (Jn 11:33; cf. Lk 8:52). The women of Jerusalem wept over Jesus as he went to the cross (Lk 23:26–27), but Jesus urged them to weep for themselves and their children because of the coming afflictions (Lk 23:28–31). The sinful woman shed tears of sorrow over the feet of Jesus (Lk 7:37–38). Both Paul and the elders of Ephesus shed tears at their final parting (Acts 20:18–19, 37–38). Paul wept tears over the Christians of Corinth (2 Cor 2:4), and Timothy wept over Paul (2 Tim 1:4). Jesus warned his disciples and followers that they would weep and mourn while the world would rejoice (Jn 16:20). And the Lord Jesus wept tears over Jerusalem (Lk 19:41) and at the tomb of Lazarus (Jn 11:35). (CC p. 203-204)

In this life the shedding of tears is as much—at times even more—the experience of Christians as are joy and laughter. In fact, tears precede the joy (see Jer 31:15–17; Jn 16:20–22). While it is of the nature of the people of God to weep and lament, it is the gift of God’s grace to turn the weeping and sorrow into joy (Jn 16:20). Still on earth, tears will flow together with the godly joy. And the tears of God’s people are precious to him in his love for them (Ps 56:8 [MT 56:9]). But God will turn the weeping into joy (Ps 126:5), for he has promised a day when “the Lord Yahweh will wipe away tears from all faces” (Is 25:8). *John now sees (in Rev 7:17) the complete and final fulfillment of this promise of God. The final word describing the peace and joy of the saints before God in heaven says it all: “and God will wipe every tear from their eyes.”* (CC p. 203-204)

### **Conclusion: An Interlude of Comfort and Encouragement**

While the inaugural vision of God’s heavenly glory and the coronation and enthronement of Jesus Christ (Revelation 4–5) controls and dominates the prophetic message of Revelation, the vision of the church militant sealed by God and of the church triumphant shepherded by the Lamb encourages and nurtures a comfort and hope that permeates the same prophetic message. *The purpose of Revelation 7, the interlude between the sixth and seventh seals, is to encourage John and his hearers—despite the fears and horrors already introduced by the first six seals and also in view of all the tribulations yet to be revealed.* While John and the seven churches have experienced the sufferings and persecutions revealed in Revelation 6—and will continue to experience them until the end of this world, when Christ returns—they are not to forget that what they had seen in the inaugural vision (Revelation 4–5) controls everything for the sake of God’s glory and that of the Lamb, and for the benefit of God’s people on earth. And now for their own encouragement and comfort and hope, they are also not to forget what they had just seen and heard in this interlude. God will protect his people as they carry out the mission of their Lord here on earth. He will not forsake them. He will not permit them to lose their faith and hope. And he promises soon to conduct them to the glorious citizenship of the church triumphant. That is to be their end—not the suffering here on earth, but instead the glory of God and of the Lamb. How much John and his hearers will need such

knowledge and encouragement in their faith, for even more dreadful portents are yet to be revealed after the seventh seal is opened! (CC p. 204)

7:9–17 John gives a glimpse of the glory that is Christ’s. How incredible to be part of that blessedness! Drawn onward and upward by the magnificence of this hope in Christ, God’s people join in the heavenly chorus even now. • By Your grace, Lord, keep me among the faithful, so that I may forever sing Your praises in the glory of heaven. Amen

## EPISTLE – 1 John 3:1-3

**See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. 2 Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. 3 And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.**

**3:1-2** The theme of 2:28–3:10 is the righteousness that results from being God’s child. The argument is stated simply: every child of the righteous Father also practices righteousness, while every person who practices sin is of the devil. The character of a person’s life reveals whose child he or she is. The wonderful contrast between the old and the new life is described in terms of the new birth. As St. John had made clear in his gospel, the new birth is through water and the Spirit in Holy Baptism. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 2)

We need to go back to 1 Jn 2:28 to put this text in the context of being “children of God.” This is a theme that runs through the Epistle. We are begotten of (from) the Father. We are brothers and sisters in Christ. We therefore have fellowship with the Father and Jesus and with one another. Having been born from God, it is our new nature to want to live as children of God and to see Christ. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 2)

The First Epistle of St. John, according to most commentators, was written to combat early versions of Gnosticism, that is, the belief that humans are basically good spirits that are trapped in an evil material world, including corrupt, inferior physical bodies. The way out of this dilemma is through special knowledge (*ginōsis*). This belief led to serious Christological heresies, such as a denial of the true, full deity of Christ. The very first verses of 1 John clearly stipulate that the “Word of life,” Jesus Christ, was actually “seen” and “touched” and “heard.” In other words, Jesus Christ, the “very God of very God,” “Son of God,” truly did come in the flesh and yet remained uncorrupted. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 21, Part 4)

But there is more to 1 John than a condemnation of Christological heresy, for John also clearly preaches salvation by grace through faith, apart from works, but not without works. As Luther says, “Thus the epistle fights against both parties: against those who would live in faith without any works, and against those who would become righteous by their works. It keeps us in the true middle way, that we become righteous and free from sin through faith; and then, when we are righteous, that we practice good works and love for God’s sake, freely and without seeking anything else” (AE 35:393). John proclaims without equivocation the relationship between faith and works. Our salvation is totally dependent on Christ’s atoning sacrifice, who is the “propitiation” (*hilasmon*) for our sins (4:10). With statements such as “We love because he first loved us” (4:19), John makes clear the relationship and necessity of love in the Christian life. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 21, Part 4)

**3:1** *see.* The pericope begins with the aorist imperative, “see” (*idete*), which has the sense of “take note,” “perceive,” “look.” For some reason, the NIV 1984 edition passes over this initial verb and thus misses

the thought that John here is calling us to pay attention, to notice and appreciate the kind of love that the Father has lavished on his children.

**3:1** *what kind of love* – “How great is the love”: (original language, “behold what sort of!; how great!”). “Love the Father has lavished on us”: (original language, “the Father has *given* to us”). His *agape* love has been (perf. act. ind.) given to us. It is the love that is unconditional, undeserved, unmerited, unlimited, unimaginable, and unfailing in the person of his Son. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 2)

John can hardly get over the greatness of God’s love. Can anyone blame him for the amazement? That God should love us so as to come down from His glorious heaven to this sinful earth to redeem us by suffering and dying in our place – the whole story is so amazing it can hardly be believed. In fact, it would not be believed if the Holy Spirit has not convinced us the power of Gospel. (LL)

This new birth identifies us as the Father’s children. The wonder of this gracious act leads John to exclaim in effect, “See how great the gift of his love really is! Why, he has identified us as being his very own children! And this is exactly what we have become through his acts. We have really been born of him!” (Glenn Barker, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981] 12:330). The *agapē* love of God has given us our new, gracious birth. This love is indeed “lavished on us,” covering the old, sinful, anti-God nature and giving us our new nature. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 2)

Quantity and quality of God’s love. Despite all our iniquity, our selfishness and sinfulness, He has called us His own children through the waters of Baptism. This love God has lavished on us is unique because it is not what our corrupted, and sinful nature deserves; it is not what our thoughts, words, and deeds have earned. (TLSB)

“Behold,” as in the KJV, conveys the thought of the original much better than the rather weak rendering “see.” Likewise, the force of *potapēn* (ESV “what kind of”) could certainly be strengthened to something more akin to what John is trying to say—for example, “how great” or “how wonderful”—when referring to the love that the Father has given to us. The perfect *dedōken* implies that this wonderful love was given but with its effects continuing up to and through the present. It is not something that was merely once given and perhaps taken away, but it is an everlasting love. The word for “love” (*agapē*) is a noun with a verbal idea behind it. *Agapē* is not merely an attitude or a feeling, but it is something that leads to action. The love spoken of here is expressed not only in emotion, but in the action of the Father in sending his Son as the propitiation for our sins. For this reason the KJV sometimes translates *agapē* as “charity.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 21, Part 4)

This love from God has earned for us the right to be called his “children” (neuter plural *tekna*), and not only are we *called* children, but in fact we *are* (*esmen*) his children. Of course the world does not recognize (*ginōskō*, “to know, have knowledge of”) the child of God as such because it cannot fathom by its own “reason or strength” that someone born in sin, and who is still subject to the temptations of sin, could be considered holy, pure, and blameless in the sight of God by the imputed righteousness that is ours by faith. If the world does not know the love of God, it cannot comprehend the holiness of a child of God. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 21, Part 4)

His *agape* love. It is the love that is unconditional, undeserved, unlimited, unimaginable and unfailing.

Quantity and quality of God’s love. (TLSB)

*has given* – We have received Christ through faith. (Concordia Bible)

dido – bestow, bring forth, commit, deliver.

Despite all our iniquity, our selfishness and sinfulness, He has called us His own children through the waters of Baptism. This love God has lavished on us is unique because it is not what our corrupted, sinful nature deserves, it is not what our thoughts, words and deeds have earned. (TLSB)

*love of the Father* – Original language, “the Father has given to us.” His agape love has been (perfect active ind) given to us. It is the love that is unconditional, undeserved, unmerited, unlimited, unimaginable, and unfailing in the person of His Son. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 2)

*children of God.* Membership in God’s family is by grace alone – the gift of God [Eph 2:8-9]. It is never a human achievement. (CSB)

In making guilty, polluted rebels and heirs of endless perdition holy – not merely servants but children, heirs of God, and partakers of endless life and glory – the grace of God surpasses all finite conception, and will be a theme of adoring praises from multitudes that no man can number, for ever and ever. (Concordia Bible)

We are God’s children now by the declaration of the Father acting in Christ to restore us to himself. In Baptism, we have the seal of that promise applied to us by water and the Word. The world does not know this or see this because the world does not see things through the eyes of faith. So the world rejects us as it rejected Jesus. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

“Children of God” (cf. 2:29) “born (begotten of/from) of him.” *Tekna*—little or young children. They have been born (begotten) of/from the Father. (See 3:9: 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18.) “And that is what we are!” A parenthetical, personal expression of joy. What a great thing it is that we are children of God! (See the endearing term “children” of those begotten of God, in 1 Jn 2:1, 12, 28; 3:7, 18; 4:4; 5:21.) “The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him” (cf. Jn 15:18–19). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 2)

Children of God! Amazing! But it was not always so. When we first entered this world, it was as God’s enemies. God had other adjectives to describe our first status – foolish, disobedient, deceived, and enslaved. The dominant emotions that govern the lives of sinful rebels are malice, envy, and hatred, says Paul in Titus 3:3 (PBC)

God calls believers by various new names: we are His servants, a nation, His royal priests, soldiers. But the dearest term of all is that He calls us His children. And that’s not just an honorary title – He has literally adopted us into His family, making us brothers and sisters of His Son Jesus, through Baptism. Paul writes in Galatians 3:26 that we are all God’s children through faith in Christ Jesus, for all who were baptized into Christ have been clothed with Christ. Our baptismal certificates are also our adoption papers. (PBC)

What a great fear and doubt destroyer it is to be God’s children! This is not a patronizing term – the point is not to make us feel little, like babies. The point is to make us feel loved, important, and secure. God the Father has solemnly obligated Himself to do for us what all good fathers do for their children – provide for our daily needs, protects, and guidance. He provides us with a sense of being worth something, of being precious. He is there for us in emergencies just as good fathers bail their children out of trouble. When we need help, when we pray, we don’t have to feel as though we are approaching a

stranger. We are talking to our Father! We can call on a relationship that He initiated – was His idea, His doing, His adoption, not ours. He stooped down to us since we couldn't climb up to Him. (PBC)

*so we are* – Believers are not just “named” children of God, but are actually reborn as His children, are actually “fathered” by God. This is no metaphor, for a new being is created (2 Cor 5:17). God promises that He has made us His children. Despite the lies, deceptions, and partial truths of the world, God has never lied to us, and He has never failed to do what He has promised. You can count on Him. (TLSB)

*did not know him* – It did not understand His true character. (Concordia Bible)

The world is blind to this new relationship of grace, for it is spiritually discerned only by those who themselves are children of God. The world identifies us as church-goers, members of a local congregation, but it does not perceive our relationship to God. Because for now God is the *Deus absconditus*, the “God hidden from the eyes of the world,” this special parent/child relationship is also hidden from the world—and so much the better! Lenski comments, “Grieve not that the world does not know you; this is proof that you are God’s child. If the world knows you, you should grieve, for then there is proof that you are not God’s child” (pp. 450–51). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 2)

Believers, the children of God possess eternal life now in time. Yet the corruption of our sin hides the glory that is already present in us. This glory is seen by faith. Although the world cannot see the glory of God in His children, the world does encounter the different lifestyles of believers. Often, the world hates believers. This hatred arises from the fact that a good life, when encountered, will always draw a comparison or judgment, confronting the world with how far it has fallen short. (TLSB)

This new, spiritual godly character of Christians is not particularly conspicuous at first sight to worldlings. If they come to see something of the righteous life in Christians, they are not aware of the source from which it springs. And the reason is that the children of this world have never learned to know the heavenly Father and His power and love. Therefore Christians should not be perturbed by the disrespect they receive or the lack of respect they experience from the world. (Stoekhardt)

**3:2 beloved** – “Dear friends” is a weak translation (lit. “beloved,” “ones whom I love”). (See 3:21; 4:1, 7, 11 for same endearing expression, “dearly beloved.”) (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 2)

*what we will be* – “What we will be has not yet been made known”: see 1 Cor 13:12. We cannot begin to imagine what it will be like to see God and to experience fully his love and life—to become fully aware of what it means to be a “child of God” Paul “was caught up to paradise. He heard inexpressible things” (2 Cor 12:4). “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him” (1 Cor 2:9). This is true of spiritual things now and of eschatological fulfillment (Is 64:4; 65:17). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 2)

John emphasizes the “now” and “not yet” nature of the believer’s relationship with the Father. We are now (*nun*) God’s children. It is a realized fact. Yet, at the same time, there is something awaiting us, as what we will be has not yet appeared. The holiness and righteousness that is ours by faith leads to palpable blessings in this life, such as a clean conscience, joy in the face of trouble and persecution (cf. Mt 5:10–12), and a peace that passes all understanding. Yet there is something more, a similitude to Christ (*homoioi autōi*) such as we have not experienced in this life. In the future there will be a time when “we shall see him as he is” (*kathōs estin*). This similitude to Christ does not imply that the distinction between the Creator and the creature will be obliterated, as so many heresies seem to hope, but rather we will experience Christ in an even more direct and complete way, and, as Luther said, “Yet, we shall be like

him. God is life. Therefore we, too, shall live. God is righteous. Therefore we, too, shall be filled with righteousness. God is immortal and blessed. Therefore we, too, shall enjoy everlasting bliss, not as it is in God but the bliss that is suitable for us” (AE 30:268). This is most clearly depicted for us in the first assigned lesson for All Saints’ Day from Revelation 7. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 21, Part 4)

1 Corinthians 13:12 – “Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.”

2 Corinthians 12:4 – “(Paul) was caught up to paradise. He heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell.”

1 Corinthians 2:9 – “However, as it is written: “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him”

Isaiah 64:4 – “Since ancient times no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who acts on behalf of those who wait for him.”

Isaiah 65:17 – “Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.”

At this time our dignity as children of God, our new life obtained in our new birth is covered up by our sinful flesh as well as by cross and sorrow and so many humiliating experiences of life. But this disgraceful shroud shall someday completely be removed. (Stoekhardt)

*God’s children* - Our description, “children of God,” is used in both vv 1 and 2. We will understand the full meaning of this relationship only in the parousia. In the present age our understanding is limited by our minds and experience. Yet the basis for our faith does not depend upon a perfect understanding; our faith is not in what we shall be then, but in our God now. As Lenski suggests, “There is no stage of existence beyond being ‘children of God’ to which we shall be raised by God at the time of Christ’s coming. . . . Here on earth we are in a humiliation that is similar to that of Christ; eventually we shall be in a glory that is also similar to that of Christ” (p. 453). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 2)

*he ... him.* Christ. (CSB)

*when he appears we shall be like him* – The beatific (bestowing bliss”) vision. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 2)

You were a dying sinner before God called you His child in Baptism. When Christ comes in glory, He will reveal the glory that He has given to you now. Luther: “God is infinite, but we are finite creatures. Moreover, the creature will never be the Creator. Yet we shall be like Him. God is life. Therefore we, too, shall live. God is righteous. Therefore we, too, shall be filled with righteousness. God is immortal and blessed. Therefore we, too, shall enjoy everlasting bliss, not as it is in God but the bliss that is suitable for us” (AE 30:268). (TLSB)

Our identity, however, cannot be separated from Jesus. We are God’s children now in Christ. This is a statement of fact not under dispute; he repeats it for the third time. We may look like other folks in the world, and others may not recognize anything different about us, but we are God’s children in Christ. We belong to the Lord not because we look or act or feel different but because of God’s Word and promise, extended to us in Baptism. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

Romans 8:29 – “For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.”

2 Corinthians 4:6 –“ For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.”

Because we are now wearing Christ’s holiness, we have everlasting life in us already. We don’t know as yet exactly how our heavenly bodies will differ from our earthly bodies. But we can get a pretty good idea that it will be wonderful, because we will be like Jesus. Imagine that – He loves us so much that He kept His body even after resurrection and ascension, just so that He could remain our human brother forever! Paul says in Philippians 3:21 that by the power that enables Jesus to bring everything under His control, he will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like His glorious body. Wow! Is this worth waiting for or what? If these are promises waiting for us, why would we go off looking for something better? What new revelations, new insights, or new knowledge could the Gnostic cults offer that is better than that? (PBC)

God is infinite, but we are finite creatures. Moreover, the creature will never be the Creator. Yet we shall be like Him. God is life. Therefore we, too, shall live. God is righteous. Therefore we, too, shall be filled with righteousness. God is immortal and blessed. Therefore we, too, shall enjoy everlasting bliss, not as it is in God but the bliss that is suitable for us. (Luther)

“When he appears, we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is”: Cf. 2:28, “when he appears.” The beatific (“bestowing bliss”) vision. “This is our destiny and glory (Rom 8:29) to be like Jesus who is, like God (2 Cor 4:6).” (A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, vol 6 [Nashville: Broadman, 1933] 221). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 2)

*see him as he is* – That transforming power of seeing Christ continues by faith as we “with unveiled faces all reflect [better contemplate] the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into His likeness with ever increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit” (2 Cor 3:18). It finally consummates in seeing Christ “face to face.”

Revelation 22:4 – “They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.”

For now, that father-child relationship is not visible to the rest of the world. Frankly, to the naked eye, we don’t look like heavenly royalty. But even if we don’t get any respect from the rest of the world, that is no cause to doubt the Father’s love – most of the world couldn’t figure out that Jesus was God’s Son either. (PBC)

Only he that is like God can see God face to face. Then we shall fully and completely be partakers of the divine nature, and we shall be entirely pure and holy. And then the spiritual, godly life will permeate and illuminate the frame of our glorified body. Then we shall be fully transformed to the image of God and appear as His children in perfected glory. (Stoekhardt)

In being begotten of/from the Father, God “made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ” (2 Cor 4:6). That transforming power of seeing Christ continues by faith as we “with unveiled faces all reflect [better ‘contemplate’] the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit” (2 Cor 3:18). It finally consummates in seeing Christ “face to face” and then “I shall know fully, even as I am fully known” (1 Cor 13:12). “They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads” (Rev 22:4). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 2)



**3:3-7** Once we are in Christ, though, we *do* begin to look like him. John now gives a description of the believer’s life of sanctification, emphasizing the similarities to Christ: The baptized “purifies himself as he is pure” (v 3). The believer is already purified in his Baptism; now he strives to live according to his new Christlike status. “In him there is no sin,” so “no one who abides in him keeps on sinning” (vv 5–6). “Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous” (v 7). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

Of course, even at this we see through the mirror dimly (1 Cor 13:12). On this side of heaven, our lives are a poor reflection of the Christ who lives in us. We have only a dim image of the future that Christ has gone to prepare for us (Jn 14:3). But when he comes again to bring to completion all things, then we will know and see what for now we know and see only by faith. Then we shall see him as he is, but we will also see ourselves clearly in Christ, with all impediments of sin and death fully removed from us. For now, we live like Christ did, in a state of “humiliation,” and we wait for the hour when we will be glorified, as Jesus waited and was glorified (Jn 12:23). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

**3:3** *hopes*. Not a mere wish, but unshakable confidence concerning the future. (CSB)

The hope of being like Christ and seeing Him as He is. (Concordia Bible)

*him*. Christ. (CSB)

*purifies himself*. By turning from sin. (CSB)

Having been purified and made holy, and given the sure hope of eternal life, we seek that which is holy and right. Born of God, we are now free to serve our Savior. (TLSB)

Here John clearly articulates the only way to true sanctification in the narrow sense. One who hopes in the Gospel is pure. It is a purity that belongs to the believer through the grace of God, by faith. John states that the believer “is pure” (*ekeinos agnos estin*). It is an accomplished reality, apart from works of the Law. Yet, it is through that reality that the believer, then, is free to flee from sin and do works of righteousness, with pure motives—not from a fear of punishment or a hope of reward. True works of sanctification are possible in the eyes of God only when done freely, and the Gospel frees the believer to do them. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 21, Part 4)

Therefore, the one who hopes in Christ will purify himself (*agnizei heauton*). He will flee from sin and seek what is good and right in the sight of God and for the benefit of his neighbor. Thus, just as there are two extremes of Christological heresy to be avoided, a denial of Christ’s divinity or a denial of his humanity, there are two extremes to be avoided concerning the relationship between justification and sanctification. One side concludes that, being justified by faith, works of the Law are irrelevant. In other words, it is a justification that leads to licentiousness. The other side concludes that works of the Law are the necessary cause of righteousness in God’s eyes. But John maintains what Luther called “the true middle way,” by showing how God loves us, so we can love one another. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 21, Part 4)

He strives now to be pure as Christ is pure. The apostle here gives the distinguishing mark of a true hope, as contrasted with every false hope. (Concordia Bible)

Every man who has the hope of the gospel, by a true steadfast faith in Christ, and earnest prayerful, persevering efforts to imitate His example, becomes, through the grace of God, more and more like Him. (Concordia Bible)

John hates the concept of “cheap grace” (the idea that we can just call on God for forgiveness, bask in it, and then live any way we please). God’s grace is free, but it is extremely expensive. It claimed Christ’s life to give it, and demands ours as we receive it. Immediately after comforting us with the message that we are God’s children, John challenges us to act like God’s children. There is a seamless connection between our justification (God’s “not guilty” verdict) and our sanctification (the way in which we live our lives for God). The former costs us nothing. The latter costs us everything. With regard to justification, we say, “We can’t.” With regard to sanctification, we say, “Yes, we can. (PBC)

From the true faith issues forth a godly life. Whoever has this Christian hope cannot but cleanse himself from sin. We hope to be like God, free from every stain of sin. Then we should now already strive to be pure, so that we keep body and soul, as far as we can, without a blemish. Indeed, a Christian who daily bears in mind his Christian hope will find it an incentive to holiness and daily renewal of life. (Stoeckhardt)

## GOSPEL – Matthew 5:1-12

**Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him.**

### The Beatitudes

**<sup>2</sup> And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying: <sup>3</sup>“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. <sup>4</sup>“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. <sup>5</sup>“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. <sup>6</sup>“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. <sup>7</sup>“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. <sup>8</sup>“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. <sup>9</sup>“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called son of God. <sup>10</sup>“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. <sup>11</sup>“Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.**

**5:1-12** 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. (TLSB)

**5:3-11** Jesus began His sermon by nine times declaring His disciples blessed because of what God had in store for them. Jesus was not making ethical demands of His followers but was describing blessings they would fully enjoy in the new heaven and new earth (Rev. 21:1). The beatitudes are a common literary form found throughout Scripture (e.g., Ps. 1:1; Luke 11:28; Rev. 19:9) (TLSB)

**5:1** *crowds* – Ἰδὼν δὲ τοὺς ὄχλους—The adversative translation of δέ as “but” is called for by the contrast between the massive crowds that followed Jesus (4:25) and his action of separating himself (though not completely; see 7:28) from them in order to teach more directly those who have begun to be “his disciples” (5:1). (CC)

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 place to darkness, favor to persecution. (PC)

Jesus separated Himself from the “great crowds” (4:25), though some did hear His teaching (7:28). (TLSB)

As part of the introduction to the Sermon, Matthew mentions for the first time the figure of the “crowds” who followed Jesus (4:25). As is clear in these verses and throughout the Gospel, the “crowds” never attain to the status of those who believe in Jesus, even if imperfectly. Although 7:28–29 will declare that in some sense Jesus also teaches the Sermon to the crowds, the specific comment in 5:1–2 that “*his disciples* approached him, and he opened his mouth and began to teach *them* and say ...” distinguishes Jesus’ “disciples” from the “crowds.” These crowds hear Jesus’ words. Moreover, they understand his claim to authority and are astonished by it, though they do not show that they accept his claim (see the textual note on ὡς ἐξουσίαν ἔχων in 7:29). However, through Jesus’ authoritative teaching, it is possible for individuals to emerge from the crowds and to *become* disciples. I shall argue that this is precisely what Matthew narrates in chapter 8. (CC)

As Dale Allison has noted in his remarkable and largely persuasive analysis of the Sermon’s overall structure, Matthew has artfully bracketed the Sermon with a narrative introduction and conclusion. Observe the careful correspondence of features: In 4:25, “Many crowds ... followed him” from around the entire region; in 8:1, “Many crowds followed him.” In 5:1, “When he had seen the crowds, he went up on the mountain”; in 8:1, Jesus “had come down from the mountain.” In 5:2, Jesus “opened his mouth and began to teach” his disciples; in 7:28–29, after Jesus “completed these words, the crowds were being astonished at his teaching.” The concept of “authority” is implicit in the formal reference that Jesus “sat down” and “opened his mouth” (5:1–2), and his “authority” is explicitly mentioned in 7:29. (CC)

These crowds followed Jesus about in many places, at times gathering by the thousands, so that Jesus often found little time to rest and privacy. Some of them may have been attracted by some of the things he did and may not really have been disciples.

*mountainside.* 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 (see note on Lk 6:20–49). The new law, like the old (Ex 19:3), was given from a mountain. (CSB)

Location unknown. Mountains were common sites for significant events (cf 17:1). Jesus’ teaching in chs 5–7 has long been known as the Sermon on the Mount. It is the first of five major sermons, or discourses, in Mt (cf ch 10; 13:1–52; ch 18; chs 24–25). Augustine: “The sermon before us is perfect in all the precepts by which the Christian life is moulded” (NPNF 1 6:3). (TLSB)

ἀνέβη εἰς τὸ ὄρος—Although εἰς often means “into,” the context of “he went up” and “mountain” naturally adjusts the sense of the preposition to mean “to, on” (see BDAG, 1 α). This clause, “he went up on the mountain,” provides the most significant textual evidence for scholars who detect that Matthew wants his readers/hearers to view Jesus as a new or greater Moses. While there is nothing inherently objectionable about such a typology, its presence here is doubtful. Although the language does occur in the LXX ten times in reference to Moses ascending Mount Sinai, it is used in other contexts as well. Therefore, that clause alone cannot bear the weight of establishing a Moses typology in 5:1–2. It is important to observe that mountains in Matthew are not particularly connected with Moses; see especially the commentary on 17:1–8, where Matthew presents Jesus in terms of his deity, and on 28:16–20, where Jesus’ identity as Son of God is most prominent. Also, LXX Ps 23:3 (MT/ET 24:3) asks about the

worshiper who “will go up on the mountain of the Lord” (ἀναβήσεται εἰς τὸ ὄρος τοῦ κυρίου, LXX Ps 23:3, from a psalm that is the background for Mt 5:8), so when the disciples approach Jesus on the mountain in 5:1, this suggests that he is “the Lord.” (CC)

Does Matthew here portray Jesus, as he ascends a mountain, sits, opens his mouth, and begins to teach his disciples, as a new or greater Moses? Many authors have so concluded. Others are not convinced. Still others acknowledge that while Matthew may be describing Jesus so as to evoke the image of Moses, other Christological concerns are more important. David Garland’s comments are especially helpful in this regard. He acknowledges (more fully than I am prepared to do) that Matthew’s early chapters contain some parallels between Moses and Jesus. He then notes the major differences between Moses and Jesus in key Matthean texts. Garland concludes that, in general and specifically in 5:1–2, “while Matthew presents Jesus as Moses-like, he does not depict him as a new Moses but as the Lord, the son of God.” (CC)

The very content of the Sermon also prevents too close an identification between Jesus and Moses. While one of the Sermon’s major units (5:21–48) has to do with the proper interpretation of the Torah, Jesus speaks there six times with unfettered *divine* authority: “But *I* say to you . . .” Moreover, most of the Sermon is not directly concerned with the Torah of Moses. In sum, while there is certainly a key continuity between God’s teaching that came through Moses and the teaching that the Lord issues out of his own authority, Jesus does not ascend the mountain in order to speak like a greater Moses. If anything, it is the disciples who receive divine revelation on the mountain who “play the role of Moses,” and Jesus speaks with the mouth of God himself. (CC)

Location unknown. Mountains were common sites for significant events (cf. 17:1). (TLSB)

*sat down.* It was the custom for Jewish rabbis to be seated while teaching (see Mk 4:1; 9:35; Lk 4:20; 5:3; Jn 8:2). (CSB)

Teachers at the time of Jesus sat in the midst of their pupils.

*disciples.* Lit. “learners.” (CSB)

Gk *mathetes*; Learner, apprentice. Common in Gospels and Acts, but never used in Epistles. Often means the 12 called “apostles” (10:1-2), but can also mean a larger group of adherents. The feminine form appears once (see note, Acts 9:36). Here, the term includes the four fishermen (cf 4:18-22) plus others from the crowds who responded to Jesus’ call to repent. (TLSB)

*mathatas* – It 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 who believed.

John 15:5 “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”

Acts 2:42 “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”

**5:2** *taught them* – ἐδίδασκεν—The imperfect indicative readily conveys an inceptive force: Jesus “*began* to teach.” See also the imperfect περιῆγεν in 4:23. Matthew’s Gospel contains five major teaching

discourses and several smaller ones; the Sermon on the Mount is the first. Here is where Jesus truly does begin to teach his disciples, and his teaching is a major concern of the first Gospel. (CC)

To a large extent, the Sermon can be seen as Jesus' blessing of his disciples (5:3–12) followed by the enunciation of the calling (5:13–16) that he has given them to be salt and light. The implications of that calling are then fully spelled out in the main body of the Sermon. The order of these parts, however, is significant. Without the blessing of Jesus—without the strength and power and hope that the Beatitudes provide when they are rightly understood and believed—no one can receive and live in the calling that Jesus then gives. (CC)

The extent to which triads dominate the Sermon's organization can be easily shown. There are nine beatitudes (though the ninth is clearly different from the first eight): three times three (5:3–12). There are two sets of three issues with regard to which Jesus says, "But I say to you ..." (5:21–32; 5:33–48). The treatment of piety deals with three issues (giving of alms, prayer, and fasting) and is characterized by strongly parallel language triply repeated (6:1–18). The summary of the disciples' calling is marked by three invitations: "ask ... seek ... knock" (7:7–11). The conclusion of the Sermon contains three warnings: "Enter ..." (7:13–14), "Beware ..." (7:15–20), and "Not everyone ... will enter ..." (7:21–27). (CC)

Another intriguing rhetorical feature of the Sermon is of some importance for understanding how the Sermon will affect, or not affect, those who hear it. The Beatitudes, it will be argued below, are the introduction or the "doorway" into the Sermon. In order to understand the Sermon aright, one must appropriate the Beatitudes as the Gospel pronouncements that they are. After eight *third person* plural statements ("the poor in spirit ...," "the people who are mourning ...," etc., 5:3–10), Jesus changes and speaks one final, longer *second person* plural statement ("You are blessed ...," 5:11–12). In other words, as people enter the "doorway," Jesus speaks first to "them" (see also 5:2) and then to "you." After the Beatitudes, the Sermon's teaching continues the second person (mostly plural) address without interruption until the concluding "exit" and warning section (7:13–27). There the pattern is reversed: the exit unit begins with second person plural warnings (7:13–14 and 7:15–20) and then shifts to third person address in 7:21–27. Thus in the exit and warning section, Jesus speaks first to "you" and then to "them." (CC)

These changes in address seem to suggest the following. Unless the hearer/reader receives for himself the Lord's teaching *through* the blessings of 5:3–12, the rest of the Sermon's teaching will not be accessible. In other words, by faith the hearer can and does claim the Beatitudes' blessings, which Jesus first offers to "them," as offered for "you." All who receive those gifts are disciples. Receiving the gifts of the Beatitudes, then, disciples hear the calling of Jesus in the main body of the Sermon's teaching. Further, every disciple of Jesus lives his life cognizant of the sober warnings about life in this time, when the reign of God in Jesus has both come and has not yet fully come, and lives with an eye on the final goal (7:13–27). A person who does not receive Jesus' blessings and does not live with that perspective will not stand on the Last Day. The final warnings at the end of the Sermon change back to third person address, applying not only to the disciples, but to all people, and thus the hearer/reader "exits" the Sermon. To the majority of the crowds, then, the Sermon on the Mount is about "them," in third person, for they do not believe in Jesus' authority. For those to whom faith and understanding begin to be granted, however, the blessing and calling of Jesus become their own; Jesus speaks to "you." (CC)

One final matter is important before turning to the exegesis of the blessed doorway to the Sermon. That is the matter of how Matthew portrays the Jesus who is here speaking. Two textual features deserve emphasis. The first pertains to the authority with which Jesus speaks the Sermon in its entirety. The crowds, who by and large remain "third person" observers of the Sermon and indeed of Jesus' ministry as

a whole, react when the Sermon is finished by marveling at Jesus' claim to authority (7:28–29). None of their other religious teachers dared to speak divine blessing and calling simply out of their own authority the way Jesus has done. In fact, Jesus has claimed that his words are the unshakeable foundation on which a person may and *must* build his hope for eschatological salvation (7:24–27)! (CC)

The second textual feature is the way that Matthew portrays Jesus *using* such unparalleled authority. Both before the Sermon and after it, Jesus speaks and acts with authority. His authority, however, is of a particular kind. It is an authority for the needy, an authority that expresses itself in healings and exorcisms (4:23–24; 8:1–16; 8:28–34), in saving those in danger (8:23–27), and in forgiving sins (9:1–8). Even through the brief narrative leading up to the Sermon (4:18–5:2), Matthew portrays a gracious Jesus, reaching out to those in need and manifesting the gracious rule of God as he drives back the power of Satan and calls people to be his disciples. (CC)

This is the Jesus who opens his mouth and begins to speak to his disciples and to all who will have ears to hear. He has brought the reign of heaven into history. He now reveals both the blessings of that reign as well as the calling given to those who in faith receive those royal end-time deeds of salvation in him. (CC)

The tension between the “already now” and the “not yet” of the reign of God in Jesus is vital and central to the message of the Beatitudes. This “already/not yet” tension is reflected most obviously in the verbs in the  $\delta\tau\iota$  clauses, the tenses of which should be taken seriously. The  $\delta\tau\iota$  clause verb  $\epsilon\sigma\tau\iota\nu$  in Beatitudes 1 and 8 (“... *is* theirs,” 5:3b; 5:10b) is present indicative. The verbs in the  $\delta\tau\iota$  clauses in Beatitudes 2–7 (5:4–9) are future indicatives. The reign of heaven in Jesus *already now* belongs to the poor in spirit (5:3b), even to those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake (5:10b). Yet the promise of final comfort (5:4b), final inheritance (5:5b), final satiation with God's saving righteousness (5:6b), final mercy (5:7b), the perfect vision of God (5:8b), and the blessed reception of full identity as the sons of God (5:9b) will come *only on the Last Day*. In the meantime, the disciples of Jesus must expect that their present existence, ever blessed because of Jesus' presence with them (18:20; 28:20), will nonetheless be characterized by “mourning,” “hungering,” and “thirsting” (5:4a, 6a). The equivalent statement in St. Paul's terms would be “We were saved in hope. ... But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait eagerly for it through endurance” (Rom 8:24–25). The tension between present blessing and joy on the one hand and present mourning until the final time of comfort on the other is central to life as Jesus' disciples. So certain and strong, however, is the promised final comfort that it impinges on and alters the present flawed existence. Jesus' disciples live now in light of what is to come. (CC)

To summarize this lengthy treatment of the Beatitudes, they do not make ethical demands, nor do they primarily exhort. They do not refer directly to Jesus himself. Rather, the subject of the main clause in every verse describes those whom Jesus has called to be his disciples. 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.” If one were to ask, “Where is Jesus?” with regard to the first four blessings, the answer would be, “In the  $\delta\tau\iota$  (‘because ...’) clauses!” Those who have no resources to offer God are nevertheless eschatologically blessed, “*because*” 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! (CC)

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 the disciples of Jesus today, who are baptized into union with

Christ and who comprise his church, which hears and receives the Beatitudes in faith. Indeed, the Beatitudes contain within themselves the kerygmatic power to *make* a hearer or reader into a disciple of Jesus and a member of his church. To hear and believe that one is poor in spirit, spiritually bankrupt, and then to hear Jesus pronounce blessing and the promise of the reign of heaven can make one into a believer in Jesus. Hearing and believing the Beatitudes can also sustain that faith. When life is hard and the power of evil is too great, Jesus' words comfort us: "The poor in spirit are blessed, because the reign of heaven is theirs!" (5:3). (CC)

Nouns and not verbs. Where there are verbs (reward part) they are done by God.

**5:3-11** Jesus began His sermon by nine times declaring His disciples blessed because of what God had in store for them. Jesus was not making ethical demands of His followers but was describing blessings they would fully enjoy in the new heaven and new earth (Rev. 21:1) (TLSB)

**5:3** *Blessed*. The word means more than "happy," because happiness is an emotion often dependent on outward circumstances. "Blessed" here refers to the ultimate well-being and distinctive spiritual joy of those who share in the salvation of the kingdom of God. (CSB)

μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοὶ τοῦ πνεύματος—In each of the nine Beatitudes, the Greek puts the plural adjective μακάριοι, "blessed," in emphatic first position, and therefore I have italicized it in the translation. Wallace notes this common phenomenon of fronting for emphasis. In each Beatitude μακάριοι is predicate to the subject (here οἱ πτωχοὶ). The adjective μακάριος in Matthew has strong connotations of present (11:6; 13:16; 16:17) and future (24:46) *salvation*. It does not mean "happy," but something much stronger, tantamount to "saved." (CC)

makareeos – To be extend great fortune and be well off. It means to have a joy (deep/true happiness) that is with us even during difficult times. One way of looking at it is that "happiness" comes from the word "happenings." Not everything that happens to us makes us happy. Joy is a "J" word as is Jesus. In Jesus we can have joy even in the midst of tears of losing a loved one or other painful events. This involves the blessings of faith that come through the Word.

makarioi – Possessing great spiritual treasures, God's favor and His aid in all aspects of life. This goes well beyond happy because happiness is linked to happenings and some of the things that happen in our lives do not make up happy. Blessed could better be described as joy because that can be linked to Jesus. We can be crying and yet have the joy of Jesus comfort in our hearts. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 1)

The Beatitudes are markedly Christological, but not in an isolated sense. They are descriptions both of Jesus and of those who have been joined by Jesus' Father to his kingdom. For Matthew Christology and ecclesiology are interrelated. They are the Christological prism through which the followers of Jesus find their standing before God. (The Sermon on the Mount – David P. Scaer – CPH – pp. 79, 81)

The Beatitudes (5:3–12) are the first unit of the Sermon on the Mount and, as I have indicated in the commentary above on the Sermon's structure, these blessings form a sort of "doorway" through which Matthew's readers/hearers must pass if they are to grasp aright the Lord's great teaching in the Sermon. The Beatitudes' structure consists of two groups of four blessings in the third person plural ("the people/they," 5:3–6 and 5:7–10) followed by a final, much longer blessing in the second person plural ("you," 5:11–12). That final, ninth statement of blessing (5:11–12) acts both as the definite conclusion to the Beatitudes as well as a transition into the second person address that characterizes Jesus' teaching in the body of the Sermon. There are obviously nine Beatitudes, each beginning with the plural adjective

“blessed” (μακάριοι). Also obviously, however, the first eight Beatitudes comprise a unit that is bracketed by 5:3 and 5:10, the only sentences in which the verb in the ὅτι clause (“because . . .”) is not a future indicative, but a present indicative (“because the reign of heaven *is* theirs,” 5:3b, 10b). Indeed, the entire ὅτι clause in 5:3 and 5:10 is identical. This inclusio marks off 5:3–10. At the same time, the common “blessed” and shared subject matter between 5:10 and 5:11–12 insure that the last long statement of blessing is related to the first eight blessings. (CC)

In addition, the eight Beatitudes in 5:3–10 can be understood as consisting of four pairs in a patterned arrangement. I will show below that 5:3 names those who occupy a certain *status* which, when hearers acknowledge it as their own status, produces the *attitude* described in 5:4. That is to say, to be “poor in spirit” is an objective condition that characterizes all humans in and of themselves, whether they know it or not. When a person begins to acknowledge that he or she is “poor in spirit,” that acknowledgment produces the “mourning” of which 5:4 speaks. A similar relationship holds for the second pair of blessings. Mt 5:5 describes a status that then produces the attitude articulated in 5:6: those who begin to see that they are objectively “lowly” (5:5) are then moved to be “hungering and thirsting for righteousness” (5:6). Thus, the first two pairs of blessings each exhibit a relationship of “condition . . . result.” (CC)

The third (5:7–8) and fourth (5:9–10) pairs of Beatitudes exhibit something very close to the same paired relationships, but in reverse order. The reversed description “result . . . condition” works well, I would judge, with regard to “merciful” (5:7) and “pure in heart” (5:8), especially when the latter descriptive phrase is understood in light of LXXs 24:3–6). Those who in their lives show themselves to be “merciful” are able to do that because they are “pure in heart.” The fourth pair of blessings is also related, but here the connection is a little different. Those who have become “peacemakers” (5:9) can expect to find themselves among those who are “persecuted because of righteousness” (5:10). For the peace that Jesus’ disciples will offer to the world will sometimes be rejected, and that very offer of peace will cause them to be hated and persecuted by others. (CC)

Turning to the interpretation of 5:3–12, then, let me emphasize again one specific point. Jesus teaches the entire Sermon with authority (see 7:29). Most especially, then, these nine eschatological Gospel blessings proclaim with authority the saving and transforming truths that the reign of God in Jesus offers to all who are Jesus’ disciples. When a man or woman is given to grasp the meaning of Jesus’ gracious preaching in the Beatitudes, that person will be able to encounter the remaining teaching of the Sermon in a certain way. You enter by the doorway. (CC)

*poor in spirit.* In contrast to the spiritually proud and self-sufficient. (CSB)

The spiritually poor who acknowledge their moral bankruptcy. Cf Lk 4:18. (TLSB)

In 5:3, Jesus pronounces both a present blessing to “the poor in spirit” and a present grounding reason for that state of blessing. Since the emphatically positioned μακάριος, “blessed,” in Matthew’s Gospel is virtually the equivalent of “saved” or “redeemed,” it is of utmost importance to specify the meaning of “the poor in spirit.” What persons does Jesus pronounce to be blessed—saved because the reign of heaven, with its attendant gifts, already now belongs to them? (CC)

As indicated above in the textual note on 5:3, the crucial context for interpreting Jesus’ first Beatitude consists of 11:2–6 and Is 61:1. We will first consider three important connections between Mt 5:3 and 11:5. First, the only theological use of the term “poor” in Matthew occurs in 5:3 and 11:5. Second, the promise of eschatological blessing is central to each context. In chapter 11, Jesus responds to the Baptizer’s query whether Jesus is the One who is to come by summarizing the deeds of the Christ in phrases drawn from Isaiah 35 and Isaiah 61, and concludes with the promise, “Blessed [μακάριος] is the



one who is not caused to stumble because of me” (11:6). Third and finally, the activity described in 11:5, “And the poor are having Good News preached to them,” portrays “the poor” as the objects of proclamation; they are being addressed. This is precisely what is happening in 5:3, albeit in third person rather than second person address. It is hard to escape the conclusion—indeed, one should not try!—that “the poor in spirit” in 5:3 are the same as “the poor” in 11:5 to whom Good News is being proclaimed. Here in 5:3, then, Jesus is proclaiming Good News to “the poor in spirit.” (CC)

With an eye still fixed on 11:2–5, then, we may ask what it means to be “poor in spirit” (5:3). If the dative of respect is virtually the equivalent of an adverb, then the phrase means “spiritually poor.” This in itself, however, does not yet lend enough precision. I want to speak carefully and precisely here and to take my lead from the other phrases found in 11:2–5. Jesus’ reply to the Baptizer identifies various groups who have been receiving his ministry: blind people, lame people, lepers, deaf people, dead people, and “the poor.” Setting the last crucial phrase aside for the moment, every one of the other groups refers to people in an objective condition of need. There is nothing in the description about the *attitude* or *awareness* of these people. Jesus has not been ministering to people who are “sorrowing that they are blind” or “aware that they are lepers,” although doubtless such sorrow and awareness existed. Rather, his ministry has gone out to those in conditions of want, of lack, of inability, of objective need. (CC)

This same objective character naturally applies to “the poor” who receive the Good News in 11:5 and to “the poor in spirit” here in 5:3. To be “poor in spirit,” in other words, refers to an objective status or condition. To be “spiritually poor,” then, is equivalent to being “spiritually destitute, without resource, without what one needs in the spiritual realm.” Those who are “poor in spirit” must have their spiritual needs provided by Another. They are, in a phrase, like sheep who are lost and distressed (9:36; 10:6) or like sinners who need to be called and forgiven (9:9–13). Thus Jesus’ opening blessing embraces all fallen human beings, for by nature all people are poor in spirit, and all need to hear Good News. (CC)

The phrase τῷ πνεύματι, “in spirit,” is a dative of respect, and virtually equivalent to an adverb: “spiritually poor.” The commentary will put forth the view that these are the same people as in 11:5: “And the poor [πτωχοί] are having Good News preached [to them].” This link between 5:3; 11:2–6; and Is 61:1 (to which Mt 11:5 refers) is the key that forestalls any interpretation that would make being “poor in spirit” either a virtue or an attitude of any kind whatsoever. It is a status, a condition. (CC)

The term “poor” as used by Matthew does not denote economic poverty, although both in Jesus’ day and in our own, the spiritually poor often are also economically poor. In a fallen world, wealth brings intrinsic spiritual danger (Mt 19:23–26; see also 1 Tim 6:9–10, 17–19), and the powerful can readily oppress those who eschew violence and instead trust in God for their ultimate hope. In such a world the “poor in spirit” may very well be physically impoverished as well. Even as we reject the excesses of what is sometimes loosely described as “liberation theology,” we must beware the dangers of living in a wealthy, consumeristic, greedy society, such as North America in the twenty-first century. It is no blessing to be economically poor, and it is not automatically a bane to have an abundance of material things. However, God can use physical want to turn hearts to himself. Moreover, Jesus and his apostles speak sharply about the folly of those who glory in their wealth and whose hearts are cold toward their needy neighbors, especially fellow believers. (CC)

Franzmann says, “It is not saying too much if one describes the poor in spirit as the man who is acutely conscious of his own nothingness, of the poverty and lack of his self, of his need for another.” In his own mind and heart he is beggarly and quite humble (Is.66:2). An example would be the tax collector who “would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God have mercy on me, a sinner.’” Yet he, Jesus says, went home justified (Lk 18:13-14). The poor are those who have repented and attached themselves to Jesus. Franzmann sees a connection between the poor in spirit and those who hunger and

thirst after righteousness, claiming that they are but two aspects of one basic attitude toward God, the Christian attitude. (cf. Ps. 25; 40:17; 69:32-33). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 1)

It is stronger than poor, it is cringingly, beggarly poor... It is the attitude that grows out of the profound realization of utter helplessness and beggary as far as any ability or possession of self is concerned. These wretched beggars bring absolutely nothing to God but their complete emptiness and need and stoop in the dust for pure grace and mercy only. This is the condition and attitude of true repentance preached by the Baptist and by Jesus as basis for all who would come to God and to His kingdom. (Lenski)

Rock of Ages – LSB 761

As Christians we confess our total spiritual poverty and look to Jesus for rescue.

ptochoi – The corporate nature Jesus shares with his people also solves the problem as to how he could describe himself as “poor in spirit,” which we have defined as “those who stand before God as destitute beggars.” He is one with his people; he bears their sins (Matthew 8:17). Not only is he poor and has no possessions, but as slave he puts himself in debt to all men. (Scaer p. 81)

Isaiah 57:15 “For this is what the high and lofty One says— he who lives forever, whose name is holy: “I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.”

*theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* The kingdom is not something earned. It is more a gift than a recompense. (CSB)

A possession that disciples enjoy even now by faith. This blessing is repeated in v 10. Augustine: “The one reward, which is the kingdom of heaven, is variously named [in the Beatitudes]” (NPNF 1 6:7). (TLSB)

ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν—In the causal ὅτι clause, the genitive pronoun αὐτῶν is in emphatic first position, and so “theirs” is italicized in the translation. Here and in 5:10 the genitive expresses possession. “The reign of heaven is theirs” is equivalent to saying, “The reign of heaven (and its attendant blessings) *belongs* to the poor in spirit.” (CC)

This is a future surety and a present reality though grace.

Jesus declares that such people are eschatologically blessed, already now. Why? Because the reign of heaven and the blessing that it is already bringing into history belong to people like that, to people who have no spiritual resources of their own: “The reign of heaven is *theirs*” (5:3). There is no reason to blur the distinctions between the tenses of the indicative mood verb in the ὅτι clause (“because ...”) of each Beatitude (see the second textual note on 5:3). The careful artistry and structure of 5:3–12 suggest that there is some precision to this teaching of Jesus. The promise of 5:3, then, is that already now the blessings of the reign of heaven in Jesus belong to those who, in themselves, do not have spiritual ability or strength. These blessings for the disciples during Jesus’ ministry include forgiveness (9:1–8), healing (e.g., 4:23–24; 8:13, 16; 15:28), and the divinely given knowledge of who Jesus is and what his reign is like (13:10–17). (CC)

We disciples of Jesus who live in the time after his resurrection and before his coming in glory possess the blessings of the reign of heaven as well: forgiveness, Baptism into Christ, the power of the Holy Spirit for faith and obedience, the nourishment of the Eucharist, the fellowship of the redeemed. All such present blessings of the reign of God in Jesus belong to those who have nothing in themselves. (CC)

This is nothing other than the Gospel of the reign of heaven (4:23), complete Good News, offered with no conditions, no specifications, no limitations. The Good News of this first Beatitude is completely consonant with the character of Jesus' ministry of preaching and teaching and healing (4:23–24). Since his disciples are those who have already begun to be shaped by his message, "Repent! For the reign of heaven stands near!" (4:17; cf. 3:2), they will begin to grasp the Good News of 5:3. In their repentance, worked by Jesus' preaching and teaching, they have begun to know that they are, in fact, "poor in spirit" (5:3). The first Beatitude from Jesus' mouth, then, is a word of complete and utter promise and grace. The reign of heaven belongs to those who have no spiritual resources of their own, to the lost, to the sinners. Because of this, Jesus pronounces them "blessed"! (CC)

The reason why the poor in spirit are blessed is that they are now, in this life, members and subjects of God's kingdom (Luke 6:20), ruled by His Spirit dwelling in their hearts. Their life will extend into heaven in God's presence – His gift. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 1)

For Matthew "the kingdom of the heavens" refers to the salvation which God is accomplishing in Jesus, that is, in his death for sinners and its proclamation. (Scaer p. 81)

Revelation 21:27 "Name in the Book"

**5:4** *those who mourn* – Over sin; similar to the spiritually poor. (TLSB)

οἱ πενθοῦντες—The present stem participle here (and in 5:6) is significant: "the people who *are* mourning ..." (CC)

he next declaration of blessing addresses those who have come to a certain awareness; they are "the people who are mourning" (5:4). The declaration of present blessing is the same as in 5:3a ("The ... *are* blessed"), but the reason for that blessing is now in the future tense: "They *will be* comforted." There is an important interplay between the present stem participle οἱ πενθοῦντες, "the people who are mourning," and the future tense "they *will be* comforted." The mourning of which Jesus speaks is something that will continue to characterize the lives of his disciples, to a greater or lesser extent, until the day of final comfort dawns at the consummation of the age. There is a realism here, an acknowledgment that even though there is present blessing in the reign of God through Jesus, there is also sin and evil, which means the full comfort is "not yet." This is, in fact, what causes the mourning: present sin and evil, both in the lives of the mourners themselves, who acknowledge that they are in themselves "poor in spirit" (5:3), and in the church and the world around them. (CC)

Mt 5:4 is not an exhortation to mourn, nor to mourn more fully, or anything like that. It would only become, in a perverse manner, a word of Law if anyone were foolish enough to think that he could be Jesus' disciple and encounter no cause for mourning. The second Beatitude follows as a result from the first. All who recognize themselves to be poor in spirit and yet also blessed in Christ will find themselves mourning over evil and sin. So the function of 5:3 is repeated in 5:4. It is a Gospel word of promise and comfort. (CC)

The use of the present tense here (penthountes) denotes continuous grieving and lamentation over one's repeated sinning. Our entire life must be continuous contrition and repentance, says Luther in the first of his 95 Theses. It is a constant cry of distress to God, which may well also include the cry caused by persecution from the enemies of Christ, mentioned in the eighth beatitude, and mourning over the damaging effects of sin, including illness and death. Already during Christ's earthly ministry He

comforted some mourners by restoring dead loved ones to life (Mt. 9:18-26; John 11). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 1)

Romans 7:15, 18-19, 24-25 <sup>15</sup>I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. <sup>18</sup>I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. <sup>19</sup>For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. <sup>24</sup>What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? <sup>25</sup>Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!

Our Lord’s primary thought must have been of mourning over not just one’s sins but over the realized poverty in spirit. (PC)

The sorrow for our sins in true contrition should not be excluded from this mourning... But, of course, we must include all other grief and sorrow due to the power of sin in the world as this inflicts blows, losses, and pain upon the godly. It includes every wrong done us, as well as every painful consequence of our won wrongdoing... Behind this sorrow of the godly lies the recognition of the merciless power of sin and our helplessness to ward it off and escape. Hence the mourning is a constant cry to God in their distress. (Lenski)

This is not walking around with a distorted face and accompanying behavior like the Pharisees sometimes did. John and Pharisees Mt 3:7-8.

Romans 5:1-5: “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>2</sup>through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. <sup>3</sup>Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; <sup>4</sup>perseverance, character; and character, hope. <sup>5</sup>And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.”

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18: “<sup>3</sup>Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. <sup>14</sup>We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. <sup>15</sup>According to the Lord’s own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. <sup>16</sup>For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. <sup>17</sup>After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. <sup>18</sup>Therefore encourage each other with these words.”

*Comforted* – The comfort the Messiah brings will be fully realized in heaven. (TLSB)

ὅτι αὐτοὶ παρακληθήσονται—In Beatitudes 2–7 (Mt 5:4–9) the subject in each ὅτι clause is the unnecessary, and so therefore empathic, third person personal pronoun αὐτοί. “They themselves” would perhaps be a bit strong, and so in the translation I have italicized “they.” The pattern of emphasizing the human *recipients* of eschatological blessing is the chief reason why several of the verbs in the ὅτι clauses are in the passive voice. The agent of the passives—the one who will *bestow* the blessings—is, of course, God. Thus, for example, “*they* will be comforted” (5:4b) means “God will comfort *them*.” (CC)

This use of the passive voice when God is the implied agent of the action is called “the divine passive.” Wallace notes with common sense that Matthew and other NT writers do not shy away from using “God”

as the subject of active voice verbs (e.g., 3:9; 6:30; 15:4; 19:6), and so he adroitly cautions against attributing this construction to a reluctance on the part of the author to use the divine name. (CC)

The future tense, used in the Second through the Seventh Beatitudes, points to an activity which God is about to do. The church's affliction shall be replaced by ecstatic joy in the sense of Psalm 126 where those who weep "shall come home with shouts of joy" (Psalm 126:6). (Scaer p. 83)

Isaiah 61:2-3 "to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion— to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor."

The future tense of "be comforted" is future to the mourning (Lenski). Divine comfort and consolation in the forgiveness of sins through faith in Christ will follow on the heels of repentant mourning. And in heaven every tear shall be wiped away (Rev. 21:4). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 1)

Matthew 11:28 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."

Romans 5:3-5, "<sup>3</sup>Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; <sup>4</sup>perseverance, character; and character, hope. <sup>5</sup>And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us."

Romans 8:28, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."

Romans 8:37, "No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us."

**5:5 meek.** This beatitude is taken from Ps 37:11 and refers not so much to an attitude toward man as to a disposition before God, namely, humility. (CSB)

Lowly, humble. (TLSB)

μακάριοι οἱ πραεῖς—I have translated the substantized adjective *πραεῖς* as "the lowly." I intend by this a reference to a status or condition, as is the case with "poor" in 5:3, and not to an attitude or activity. The term *πραῦς* can bear the meaning of "gentle" or "humble" in a positive, voluntary, active sense, and this is the meaning when it is applied to Jesus in 11:29 and 21:5; see it also in 1 Pet 3:4, as well as LXX Num 12:3 (translating *רַחֵם*); Joel 4:11 (ET 3:11; MT 4:11); Zech 9:9 (translating *רַחֵם*); Dan 4:19 (MT 4:16; ET 4:19). Far more often in the LXX, however, the Greek term translates the Hebrew *רַחֵם* in the sense of "one who is objectively in need of deliverance." That is the force of the term in LXX Ps 36:11 (MT/ET 37:11), which is an extremely close parallel to Jesus' words here: οἱ δὲ πραεῖς κληρονομήσουσιν γῆν, "But the lowly will inherit the land." See *πραῦς* also in LXX Pss 24:9 (MT/ET 25:9); 33:3 (MT 34:3; ET 34:2); 75:10 (MT 76:10; ET 76:9); Job 24:4 (cf. Job 36:15; Zeph 3:12; Sirach 10:14). At times, "the lowly" are contrasted with "the wicked" (LXX Pss 36:10–11 [MT/ET 37:10–11]; 146:6 [MT/ET 147:6]; cf. Is 26:5–6), and at least once, "the lowly" are equated with God's people (LXX Ps 149:4). Thus, as many interpreters note, "the lowly" here in Mt 5:5 are essentially in the same needy condition as "the poor" (5:3), and the two expressions are closely parallel in meaning. (CC)

This is in a condition or status of not being able to help or save themselves. They may be oppressed by many different things or by many people. The oppressive power of Satan and their own sins are at the heart of their lowly status. (CC)

Here the Savior is referring to the kindly disposed – gentle, patient, and forgiving people which Arndt renders as the “kindhearted,” exemplified in the attitude of Jesus (1 Peter 2:23). Certainly they are not the gruff, the stern, the proud or violent – the grasping wicked ones (Psalm 37). Paradoxically, the latter are often the people who in this life enjoy greater prosperity (Mt. 6:25-34; Lk 18:29-30). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 1)

These are those who trust in the Lord and wait patiently for him and place their hope in him. The meek are not loud and boisterous or insist on their rights but even abide mistreatment for the sake of Christ and his kingdom. Jesus demonstrated this by giving up his place in heaven, suffering and going to the cross for us.

Psalm 37:11 “But the meek will inherit the land and enjoy great peace.”

prais – This refers to internal condition of a person before God and known only to him. It manifests itself in behavior that could be described as “gentle, patient or kindhearted” exemplified in the attitude of Jesus.

1 Peter 2:23 “When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.”

This beatitude comes from Psalm 37, especially verse 11. The meek are certainly not the gruff, the stern, the proud or violent – the grasping wicked ones described in this psalm. Interestingly the people who act like that are often people who in this life enjoy greater prosperity. (Mt. 6:25-34; Lk 18:29-30)

*Shall inherit the earth* – We will inherit the new heavens and new earth after our bodies are resurrected on the Last Day. (TLSB)

Jesus, the Son of God, promises to all such oppressed and spiritually powerless disciples the future eschatological inheritance of a new creation: “They will inherit the earth.” Please observe that the hope of those who are in need of deliverance is not some disembodied existence of the soul. The hope is both creational and eschatological. There will be a regeneration of all things (Mt 19:28) and a final Judgment Day (25:31–32). Those who have suffered oppression at the hands of wicked forces and wicked men will receive the blessings of God’s great reversal on that day. The light of that future horizon is already now beginning to shine; the reign of heaven stands near (4:17)! With that light on the horizon, the lowly are already saved, already blessed. (CC)

In the judgment scene the word “inherit” refers to what the Son of Man gives his followers on the Day of Judgment (25:34). Though Matthew does not use the word “grace,” he expresses the thought of unmerited and unearned reward with the word “inherit.” The followers of Jesus inherit a land which they did not earn. In the final judgment scene none makes a claim to reward for what they have done. (Scaer p. 85)

**5:6** *hunger and thirst for righteousness* – Fervent desire for God’s righteousness, or salvation (Is 51:5–8; cf 3:15). (TLSB)

μακάριοι οἱ πεινῶντες καὶ διψῶντες τὴν δικαιοσύνην—The meaning of “righteousness” here is determined by the clause in which it occurs. Presumably, δικαιοσύνη refers to something that the named subjects desire but do not possess. They also cannot obtain it for themselves; otherwise, it is difficult to imagine why they would continue “hungering” and “thirsting” for it, as implied by the present tense participles πεινῶντες and διψῶντες. In view of the eschatological context, I take “righteousness” here in the same sense as in 3:15, namely, God’s saving end-time deeds. (CC)

This verse is the nucleus of this sermon study. The tense of two participles, *peinontes* and *diphontes*, denotes continued action of those who strongly desire and long to do God's will far more completely than they have been doing. Even in the very act of doing God's will, they know that they have not attained what they desire. Paul's example of not having attained perfection, but straining toward and pressing on toward the goal, is apropos (Phil. 3:12-14). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 1)

Isaiah 55:1, "Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost."

Jeremiah 23:6 "In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness."

Matthew 6:33 "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

Man who went to Buddhist monk for information but didn't stop talking about how much he knew. Cup to overflowing – interview is over you are too full of yourself.

*peinontes* and *dipsontes* – Both are present tense participles that denote continued action. This refers not to a physical hungering, but to an internal longing of the soul in its relationship to God. The background is Israel's sojourning in the wilderness where for both food and water they were completely dependent upon God. They long for something which only God can satisfy. (Scaer p. 85)

The craving for... Intense longing, such as can only be compared to that of a starving man for food. (PC)

Of the seven appearances of the word "righteousness" in the gospel, five are found in the Sermon. In none of these places can the meaning of righteousness be the fulfillment of God's legal demands in the sense of the commandments. (Scaer p. 85)

Righteousness is to be understood in this context as referring to the sanctified life of right living according to God's will, which results from justification by grace through faith in Christ. It must be better than the "righteousness" of the Scribes and Pharisees (Mt. 5:20), which was no righteousness in God's sight and insufficient before Him (Arndt). No righteousness of our own, even it exceeds that of the Scribes and Pharisees, will suffice for entrance into the kingdom of heaven. Only the imputed righteousness of Christ through faith achieves that. In Christ we "become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor. 5:21) (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 1)

*Shall be satisfied* – This is done by the work of Christ.

ESV – satisfied – "We have the clear assurance that God does not cast aside sinners, that is, those who recognize their sin and desire to come to their senses, who thirst after righteousness." (Luther) (TLSB)

The Greek passive voice points to satisfaction given us by someone else, which will be abundant satisfaction, as this strong verb connotes. In the miraculous feedings of the 5000 and 4000, this same verb is used (Mt. 14:20; 15:37), and it is significant that in both cases there were leftovers – more than the people could eat. God will satisfy the hunger and quench the thirst for righteousness, for God-pleasing living, and provide true happiness. But due to our present weakness a drop of bitterness will always remain in our cup on this earth. Only in the hereafter will we be perfectly satisfied and sanctified through the perfect, imputed righteousness of our Savior (Cf. Luke 6:25). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 1)

Matthew 3:15 “Jesus replied, “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.” Then John consented.”

They will be satisfied or filled, points to something which God is going to accomplish eschatologically, though he has already begun to do it. (Scaer p. 85)

Isaiah 55:1 Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.”

**5:7** *the merciful* – A disciple who truly appreciates God’s blessings will be a merciful person and will receive mercy (cf 18:33). (TLSB)

There is a noticeable shift in the Beatitudes in 5:7. Jesus’ words are still Good News. Jesus still pronounces present blessing. Moreover, the future eschatological gifts of God are still the reason for present blessedness, as affirmed explicitly in 5:10, where Jesus repeats the promise of 5:3, “because the reign of heaven *is* theirs,” and also in 5:12, where Jesus promises, “Your reward is great in heaven.” I argued above that in 5:3–6, the disciples of Jesus were described in terms of their inability, rather than their accomplishments, and clearly the last two Beatitudes (5:10–12) promise blessing for disciples who passively suffer. (CC)

In 5:7, however, Jesus says, “The merciful are blessed, because they will be shown mercy.” Is this not in effect an exhortation: “Be merciful, so that you may be shown mercy”? I would argue that that is not the force of 5:7. Rather, the adjective “merciful” (as with the other adjectival subjects in the first four Beatitudes) *describes* Jesus’ disciples—all of them. It bespeaks the transforming power of discipleship and of Jesus’ call to faith. Jesus himself is mercy incarnate, perfect mercy. One simply cannot become his disciple without also beginning to exhibit mercy in a new way. (CC)

This is not merely true in a broad, scriptural or dogmatic way. Matthew itself displays the exegetical evidence to support this contention. It is true that the language of “mercy” is not prominent in Matthew’s Gospel. The adjective ἐλεήμων, “merciful,” actually occurs in the NT only in Mt 5:7 and Heb 2:17. The cognate noun “almsgiving” (ἐλεημοσύνη) occurs in Mt 6:2, 3, 4, where Jesus does assume that his disciples will show such mercy to those in need. Jesus himself responds to the plea of people for him to “show mercy” (ἐλεέω, 9:27; 15:22; 17:15; 20:30–31) by healing or exorcizing, but the disciples do not figure in those texts. To the contrary, the disciples are unable to exorcise the demoniac after Jesus’ transfiguration (see the commentary on 17:14–21), and they ask Jesus to give the Canaanite woman what she wants so they can send her away (see 15:21–28). (CC)

The language of showing mercy does figure prominently in the parable of the Unforgiving Servant (18:23–35), and this parable’s message provides the chief support for the view that “merciful” in 5:7 can describe disciples of Jesus *qua* disciples. In brief, the master in that parable shows mercy (18:33) to the servant who owed an astronomical debt. That act of mercy, specifically in the action of the master’s forgiveness (18:27), has within itself the power to turn his servant into someone who also shows mercy and forgives the debt owed to him by a fellow servant. In the parable, however, the first servant refuses to show mercy. The result? He is no servant at all, but is condemned and cast into the parabolic equivalent of hell. (CC)

The order of events is all-important. First, the master shows mercy. If that mercy has its desired effect, it both forgives the debt and transforms the debtor. If the mercy does not have its desired effect, then the debtor is not transformed *and the debt remains*. The fifth Beatitude is to be heard in a similar way. First comes the proclamation of present and future blessing to those who have nothing but need, nothing but



inability, nothing but hunger and thirst (5:3–6). Then comes the promise to those who are merciful (5:7). Jesus, who is perfect mercy, *empowers* his disciples, who are united to him, to be merciful. They are not perfectly merciful, of course; just read Matthew’s narrative, read the NT, read church history, and observe the life of every believer! At the same time, however, mercy does emerge after mercy has entered in. Mt 5:7 describes all who are Jesus’ disciples; it reminds them of their identity and promises final blessing and merciful forgiveness at the judgment. It is still a Gospel statement, not an exhortation or command. The force is this: “Those who are mine, and who therefore have begun to be merciful, are eschatologically blessed, for on the Last Day they will receive my mercy in all its fullness.” (CC)

To a worldly-minded person, giving to the poor, visiting and comforting the sick, showing hospitality and aiding people in need and distress is merely a waste of time and money. But showing others the mercy we have experienced from God (Mt. 18:21-35), we will be treated with mercy in this life and in the life to come – not that it is the basis for obtaining life eternal, but because it presupposes justifying faith. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 1)

eleamones – While in the OT mercy describes Israel’s God who, without limitation, forgives his erring people and always restores them to their former fortunes and status as his own people, in the NT mercy finds its purist expression in Jesus. Mercy describes the community of Jesus as a forgiving one. (Scaer p. 87)

**5:8** *heart*. The center of one’s being, including mind, will and emotions (see note on Ps 4:7). (CSB)

These are those who do not worship false gods. Augustine: “A pure heart... is a single heart; and just as this light cannot be seen, except with pure eyes; so neither is God seen, unless that is pure by which He can be seen” (NPNF1 6:5). (TLSB)

μακάριοι οἱ καθαροὶ τῆ καρδίᾳ—As with τῷ πνεύματι in 5:3, τῆ καρδίᾳ is a dative of respect. The precise phrase καθαρὸς τῆ καρδίᾳ, “pure in heart,” is found elsewhere in the Scriptures only in LXX Ps 23:4. See the commentary for the importance of attending to this psalm as the context for the meaning and exegesis of Mt 5:8. The adjectival phrase καθαρὰ καρδίᾳ, a “pure heart,” occurs in LXX Gen 20:5–6; Ps 50:12 (MT 51:12; ET 51:10); Job 11:13; 33:3; 1 Tim 1:5; 2 Tim 2:22; and some manuscripts of 1 Pet 1:22. (CC)

Next comes “The pure in heart are blessed, because they will see God” (5:8). The chief task here is to determine what Jesus means by “the pure in heart” (οἱ καθαροὶ τῆ καρδίᾳ). The precise phrase occurs in the NT only here, and in the LXX it occurs only in Ps 23:4 (where it is singular, not plural; MT/ET 24:4), to which I will turn below. The Greek phrase καθαρὰ καρδίᾳ, “a pure heart,” occurs several times in Scripture and with a variety of meanings. In LXX Gen 20:5–6, the phrase applies to Abimelech, who took Sarah without knowing that she was Abraham’s wife, so there “with a pure heart” means “innocently, with no obvious evil intent.” In the Pastoral Epistles, Paul twice speaks of believers having a “pure heart,” which produces love for others (1 Tim 1:5) and a sincere dependence upon the true God (2 Tim 2:22). In Ps 51:12 (ET 51:10; LXX 50:12), David prays that God would create in him a “pure heart” after he has confessed his great sin of adultery with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah; here the phrase means “a heart that has been purified” by God’s forgiveness. The result of this gift from God will be the proclamation of God’s ways to transgressors and sinners (Ps 51:15 [ET 51:13; LXX 50:15]). In summary, the phrase “in/with a pure heart” can refer to an innocent motive (Gen 20:5–6), to one’s standing before God as forgiven sinner Ps 51:12 (ET 51:10; LXX 50:12), or more holistically to one who is in a right standing with God and therefore engaged in love for God and others (1 Tim 1:5; 2 Tim 2:22). (CC)

Commentators variously describe the force of “pure in heart” in the sixth Beatitude (Mt 5:8). Problematically, there seem to be few controls or guiding data that determine how the phrase is

understood. What is perplexing, however, is the way that scholars routinely refer to LXX Ps 23:4 (MT/ET 24:4) as background without investigating the meaning of “pure in heart” in that psalm’s context. Since most seem to agree that LXX Psalm 23 is a helpful backdrop, it is reasonable to allow the meaning of “pure in heart” there to guide the way we understand Mt 5:8. (CC)

LXX Psalm 23 (MT/ET Psalm 24) exhibits a strong liturgical setting and tone. The third verse asks, “Who will go up to the Lord’s mountain, and who will stand in his holy place?” referring to worship at the temple on Mount Zion. Verse 4 provides the answer to the question. LXX Ps 23:4 (MT/ET 24:4) literally reads:

The one innocent in hands and the one pure in heart [καθαρὸς τῆ καρδίᾳ],  
who did not take his soul to a vain thing  
and did not swear on a deceitful thing to his neighbor.

The psalm continues in verses 5–6, according to the LXX:

This one will receive blessing [εὐλογίαν] from the Lord  
and mercy [ἐλεημοσύνην] from God, his Savior;  
this is the generation of those who are seeking him,  
of those who are seeking the face of the God of Jacob. (CC)

Presumably—and this is the crucial exegetical move—the two relative clauses in LXX Ps 23:4 (MT/ET 24:4) that come after the psalmist has identified the qualified worshiper actually define what it means to be “innocent in hands” and (especially) “pure in heart.” That is to say, someone who is “pure in heart” is defined by the two relative clauses as someone “who did not take his soul to a vain thing and did not swear on a deceitful thing to his neighbor.” To what do those two relative clauses refer? We can examine their meanings first in the Hebrew of the MT, and then reflect on the Greek of the LXX. (CC)

For the first clause, the MT of Ps 24:4 reads, “who did not lift up his soul to vanity” (אֲשֶׁר לֹא־נָשָׂא לְשָׁוְיָא נַפְשׁוֹ). The phrase “to lift up the soul” can mean “to long for” something (Deut 24:15; Jer 22:27). In this context, however, and in light of parallels in Pss 25:1; 86:4; 143:8, it means “look trustingly to, worship.” The prepositional phrase “to vanity” (לְשָׁוְיָא) can be adverbial, meaning “in vain” and is so used in the Second Commandment (Ex 20:7). אֲשֶׁר can also refer explicitly to an “idol” as a “vain thing” (Ps 31:6; Jonah 2:8). In the liturgical context of the psalm, this clause refers to someone who has not looked “to an idol” or to another god for help, but who desires to go up to Zion in order to worship the God of Israel, the only true God. (CC)

The second clause in MT Ps 24:4, “and (who) did not swear by deceit” (וְלֹא נִשְׁבַּע לְמַרְמָה), also likely refers to worship. This verb “to swear” (Niphal of נִשְׁבַּע) and the noun “deceit” (מַרְמָה) do not occur together elsewhere in the Hebrew text of Scripture. The prepositional phrase “to/by deceit” (לְמַרְמָה) may be merely adverbial here: “(who) did not swear deceitfully.” However, לְמַרְמָה is parallel to לְשָׁוְיָא, and לְשָׁוְיָא, “to a vain thing,” likely means “to an idol.” Therefore, לְמַרְמָה, “by a deceitful thing,” may be a second reference to an idol. Thus “(who) did not swear by a deceitful thing” means “(who) did not swear by an idol.” On the basis of the MT, then, the worshiper who is able to ascend to worship at Zion is precisely he who has not worshiped another god nor has engaged in syncretistic practices. Rather, he only worships and acknowledges the God of Israel and seeks blessing and mercy from him alone. (CC)

We can now consider the Greek equivalent. LXX Ps 23:4 (MT/ET 24:4) preserves the message of the Hebrew original: the person who is “pure in heart” is one “who did not take his soul to a vain thing” (ὁς οὐκ ἔλαβεν ἐπὶ ματαιίῳ τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ). The normal Greek rendering for the liturgical idiom “to lift up the soul” employs αἶρω (LXX Pss 24:1; 85:4; 142:8 [MT/ET 25:1; 86:4; 143:8]), whereas LXX Ps 23:4

uses λαμβάνω. At other times, however, the LXX translates Hebrew  $\psi\eta\eta \nu\psi\eta$  with λαμβάνω ψυχή (2 Sam 14:14; Hos 4:8), so the choice of λαμβάνω does not materially affect the meaning of LXX Ps 23:4. The substantized adjective “a vain thing” (μάταιος) often has close connections to idolatry in the LXX<sup>a</sup> and probably refers to idolatry here in LXX Ps 23:4. The second clause in LXX Ps 23:4 about a person who is “pure in heart” is that he is one “(who) did not swear by a deceitful thing to his neighbor” (οὐκ ὄμοσεν ἐπὶ δόλω τῷ πλησίον αὐτοῦ). The action of “swearing by a deceitful thing” also refers to worship offered to an idol; the same Greek idiom (with ἐν instead of ἐπί) pertains to idolatry in Wisdom 14:30, and similar idioms are used in LXX Jer 5:2; 7:9. (CC)

Both MT Ps 24:4 and LXX Ps 23:4, then, teach that the person who is innocent in hands and “pure in heart”—who is able to ascend Mount Zion and worship Yahweh there—is precisely the person who has been taught that there is only one God to worship and only one Lord by whom a person is to swear. People who approach with *this* purity of heart may go up to Zion and expect to receive blessing and mercy from the Lord. That is why, after all, people go up to Zion in the first place: they go up in need, confessing their sins and acknowledging that their help is in Yahweh, Israel’s God, and in him alone (see Psalms 121; 123; 130). (CC)

If this is the meaning of “pure in heart” in Psalm 24 (LXX Psalm 23), should it be used as guide for understanding Mt 5:8? There are four reasons, indeed, to let the teaching of Psalm 24 thus guide our understanding of Jesus’ words. First, the two texts share the phrase common to them alone, “pure in heart.” Second, they both involve contexts of people going up on mountains. Third, “mercy” is close at hand in the context of both—as a gift received in both LXX Ps 23:5 (MT/ET 24:5) and in Mt 5:7, the Beatitude that precedes Mt 5:8. Finally, both Ps 24:6 and Mt 5:8 evoke the promise of seeing God. The psalm envisions God’s presence in the Jerusalem temple, to which the worshiper ascends. The Beatitude envisions the final, full benefit of face-to-face communion with God in the glory of the age’s consummation in the new Jerusalem, where God’s servants “shall see his face” (Rev 22:4). (CC)

If this theology of the psalm is allowed to guide the interpretation of Mt 5:8, the following emerges: Jesus speaks Good News to those who know what it means to seek the true and living God, and to go up on his mountain to worship. He blesses, in the present time and for the Last Day, those to whom God has thus revealed himself. (CC)

Moreover, we can even be more precise in the context of this Gospel in general and of the Beatitudes in particular, where “the Lord” (3:3) is speaking authoritative blessing from his seat on the mountain (5:1). The “pure in heart” (5:8) are those who believe that the God of Israel can be found in this Jesus, who is “Immanuel,” “God is with us” (1:23). They are “pure in heart” because Jesus has called them (cf. 4:18–22), because the realities (and mysteries!) of the reign of heaven in Jesus are being revealed to them. They are not the pure in heart because they understand everything. Nevertheless, they have begun to repent and believe (4:17); they have been *given* pure hearts (Ps 51:12 [ET 51:10; LXX 50:12]). (CC)

Moreover, we may posit an important connection between the fifth (Mt 5:7) and sixth (Mt 5:8) Beatitudes. Those who have received mercy (LXX Ps 23:5 [MT/ET 24:5]) through Jesus and thus have become themselves “the merciful” (5:7) are such because they have been given pure hearts to know the face of the God of Israel in Jesus Christ. As disciples they have come to Jesus, “seeking the face of the God of Jacob” (LXX Ps 23:6 [MT/ET 24:6]). Jesus promises that on the Last Day, “they will see God” (Mt 5:8). (CC)

Those who do not worship false gods. “A pure heart ... is a single heart; and just as this light cannot be seen, except with pure eyes so neither is God seen unless that is pure by which He can be seen.” [Augsburg] (TLSB)

The “pure in heart” are those who strive for all that is true, honest, just, lovely, of good report, Christ-like (Phil. 4:8), and with singleness of purpose strive to resist and desist from the love of money, love of the world, the lust of the flesh and eyes, and the pride of life (1 John 2:15-16). They strive to keep their hearts pure, as God is pure (1 John 3:2-3), though out of their hearts proceeds by nature all manner of evil (Mt. 15:19; Prov 20:9). Again, all such efforts in this life will fall short of perfection, but the believer in Christ makes a beginning. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 1)

The heart is the center of a person’s being. They have learned a singleness of devotion from Jesus, especially as he was tempted in the desert and determined to live only by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

The attention here is not on the outward behavior in the sense of the Pharisees who perform their righteousness before men, but on the inward condition, which is known only to God (6:1). What is impossible for man by himself (such as purity of heart) becomes possible for him as he is in Jesus. (Scaer pp. 87-88)

*Shall see God* – They rely on him and his work of salvation and will see him on the last day.

The worshiper in Ps. 24 who sought the face of God experienced the coming of the King of glory (vv. 7-10). Such disciples took forward to seeing God. (TLSB)

Seeing God is reserved as an eschatological reward for the faith that God has given them.

Luther holds that this seeing is understanding God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, which is obtained from the Scriptures. Arndt (like others) stresses the future tense of the verb and refers “seeing God” to “the blessed eternity the Christian enters at the time of his death and which finds its consummation in the everlasting kingdom that Christ established on the Day of Judgment. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 1)

**5:9** *the peacemakers* – Jesus would send out His disciples to bring peace to those who were worthy (10:13). (TLSB)

In the seventh blessing (5:9), Jesus continues to address those who are his disciples: “The peacemakers are blessed, because they will be called sons of God” (5:9). The exegetical task here resembles that in 5:7, namely, to work with the small number of exegetical connections that this passage has to its Matthean context. Just as the language of “mercy” (5:7) is rare in Matthew, so is the language of “peacemaking” or even simply of “peace.” The adjective here (εἰρηνοποιός) occurs nowhere else in the entire Bible. Idioms for “make/establish peace” and the term “peace,” as well as the general concept of peace, occur in Scripture often, and in a variety of contexts. Perhaps the closest verbal parallel to 5:9 is James 3:18: “And the fruit of righteousness is being sown in peace for those who make peace.” The context in James indicates that “making peace” there is occurring intramurally, that is, within the Christian assembly. (CC)

The language of “peace” is not absent from the rest of Matthew’s Gospel. It occurs again in chapter 10 in some striking ways that match up remarkably well with 5:9 if, as I have argued for the first six Beatitudes, Jesus’ blessings come in pairs. To state things in another way, what will emerge if we suppose that “the peacemakers are blessed” (5:9) and “the ones who are persecuted because of righteousness are blessed” (5:10) are in some sense paired together in meaning? Read together, 5:9–10 provides a remarkable parallel to the only other use of “peace” language in the First Gospel: the “peace” language in the Missionary Discourse of chapter 10. (CC)

As Jesus is sending out the twelve apostles to their narrowly defined ministry to the lost sheep, which are the house of Israel, he instructs them to “greet” (ἀσπάζομαι) whichever house will receive them (10:12). If that house proves to be worthy, that is, if its occupants accept the apostolic greeting, Jesus says, “Let your peace come upon it. But if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you” (10:13). Jesus has already given to the apostles the words that offer peace: “The reign of heaven stands near” (10:7). Those whom Jesus sends out are to bring peace to all who will receive it. This peace comes through the proclamation of the Good News of the reign of heaven in Jesus. (CC)

As the Missionary Discourse goes on to make abundantly clear, however, many will reject the message of peace and even persecute the messengers (see 10:14-18). Yet Jesus’ disciples should not be surprised, for he teaches them explicitly, “Do not think that I came so as to bring peace upon the earth. I did not come so as to bring peace, rather, a sword. For I came to divide a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother” (10:34–35a). The peacemakers will at times become those who are persecuted from city to city (10:23). (CC)

I would propose that in the first place, the phrase “the peacemakers” in 5:9 refers to Jesus’ disciples as they bring the message of the reign of heaven in Jesus into the world. Not all of them will bring the Gospel in the same ways, for twelve of his disciples will be chosen to be unique apostles (10:1–4), while others will be missionaries, evangelists, or pastors, and still others will be disciples of Jesus in their ordinary vocations in life. Christ’s church exhibits many different members with different callings and offices. All, however, in their own way have the same calling to be salt and light for the world (see the commentary below on 5:13-16). The peacemaking should not be seen as limited *only* to apostolic or pastoral activity. Jesus’ disciples will be active as peacemakers in any number of ways. As the parallel in James 3:18 shows, even after disciples are made, there is ample opportunity for peace to come *again* into their midst. Further, in their worldly and godly callings, Jesus’ disciples will have opportunity to work for the restoration of wholeness in many ways. (CC)

Firstly and primarily, however, blessed are the peacemakers whom God uses to bring the message of the reign of heaven, so that others may have the peace that Jesus brings. At the fulfillment of all things, Jesus’ peacemaking disciples will be called the “sons of God” (Mt 5:9). (CC)

The eiranopoiōi are those who make peace by communicating the message of reconciliation between God and man (2 Cor 5:18-21). As people who are at peace with God are filled with His peace which passes all understanding, they strive to thwart divisions, quarrels, and hatreds, and to work for God-fearing peace between Christians, neighbors, communities, and nations. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 1)

Isaiah 9:6 “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”

The title of peacemaker is clearly a redemptive term applicable to God’s Messiah as the Reconciler. It means that the followers of Jesus become in him God’s instrument of reconciliation with the world. (Scaer pp. 88-89)

*Shall be called sons of God* – The Son of God is named the Prince of Peace (Is 9:6). Those who trust in Him are blessed by being God’s sons and daughters (Gal 3:26–28). (TLSB)

Led by the Spirit of God they are sons of God (Rom 8:14), members of his family and kingdom. God not only designates them “sons,” but actually makes them so. The bearer of the name actually is what the name says about him. The passive be named thus approaches closely the mean to be. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 1)

**5:10-12** Mt 5:9 and 5:10, the seventh and eighth Beatitudes, do go together, and the peace of the Good News in Jesus will not be welcome to many (again, see the rejection of the “peace” and the persecution in 10:12–18, 34–42). Therefore, Jesus begins the eighth Beatitude with these words: “The ones who are persecuted because of righteousness are blessed” (5:10). “Righteousness” here in 5:10 could refer to the righteous behavior of those who follow Jesus in the way of discipleship. However, owing to the parallel between “because of righteousness” (ἔνεκεν δικαιοσύνης) in 5:10 and Jesus’ words in 5:11, “You are blessed whenever people insult you ... *because of me*” (ἔνεκεν ἐμοῦ), it is much more likely that “righteousness” in 5:10 has the same meaning as in 3:15 and 5:6, namely, God’s righteous saving deeds in Jesus. (CC)

In the eighth (5:10) and ninth (5:11–12) Beatitudes, then, Jesus completes his promise of blessing to his disciples. He describes them as those who are persecuted, insulted, the objects of slander. The dependent clause “whenever people insult you” in 5:11 makes it clear that, unlike the first seven Beatitudes (5:3–9), the final two Beatitudes (5:10–12) will not always apply to every disciple, nor will all experience such reproach in the same way. Jesus’ disciples are at all times, in themselves, “poor in spirit,” “mourning,” “lowly,” and “hungering” for God’s victory (5:3–6). By the power of their union with Jesus, his disciples have all begun to be “merciful,” “pure in heart,” and “peacemakers” (5:7–9). It will not always be the case that all of Jesus’ disciples are persecuted at all times. (CC)

When persecution for the sake of Jesus, who enacts God’s saving righteousness, does happen, Jesus promises his blessing. The reign of heaven and its blessings already belong to believers in such difficult times, just as those blessings belong to all who have nothing to offer to God, who are poor in spirit (5:3). Moreover, Jesus’ words in 5:11 invite a radical reinterpretation when his disciples are defamed and persecuted for his name’s sake. The final end-time reward that is stored up in heaven for such disciples is “great” indeed (5:12). They stand in line with God’s greatest servants of old, his “prophets” (5:12). They stand in line with Jesus, who came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets (5:17; see also the second textual note on 1:22). (CC)

The final two Beatitudes prevent Jesus’ disciples, then and now, from adopting any triumphalistic ideas about the “advance of the reign of God.” The final day of victory does indeed belong to the Almighty and to his Christ. The present reign of God in Jesus, however, is a hidden reality that can only be known to those to whom it is revealed (11:25–27; 13:10–17; 16:17). Although power accompanies the ministry of Jesus and of the Twelve in Israel, the goal of Jesus’ ministry will not come with power in the way that the world thinks of such things. The forerunner of the Coming One has been arrested (4:12); he will die in the prison of the king (14:1–12). The disciples of the Coming One will at times be resisted and hated and persecuted. The Coming One himself will reign as King of the Jews and the Son of God. He will so reign, however, from a cross. Let the one who has ears hear! (CC)

**5:10** *those who are persecuted for righteousness sake* – Many times the suffering that we endure is something that our own actions have brought about. This suffering spoken of here is what we experience because we have for the sake of the Gospel. It is being insulted (v. 11) because we hold to the true faith.

Jesus later warned the disciples He sent out as peacemakers (v 9) that persecution would also be their lot (10:16–22). Augustine: “Where there is no sound faith, there can be no righteousness, for the just [righteous] man lives by faith” (*NPNF* 1 6:7). (TLSB)

οἱ δεδιωγμένοι—Some want to give the perfect passive participle its full force: “those who have been and now still are in a condition of having been persecuted.” However, it would be wrong to claim that the perfect stem participle requires that “persecution has occurred in the past and continues in the present.” The perfect does not indicate that the past *action* is continuing. Rather, it naturally emphasizes that the

condition that results from the past action is a continuing *condition*. Rather than giving the participle its full force here, it is likely functioning more like a simple adjective, in light of the other adjectives in Mt 5:7, 8, 9. Therefore it is translated in the present tense: “the ones who *are* persecuted.” (CC)

Those who suffer ridicule, pain, refusal, punishment, loss of possessions or friends or family for doing what is right in God’s sight, as Jesus did, are (present tense) members of the kingdom of God now and forever. Membership is not gained by persecution, though persecution is the badge of Christ’s followers. The Spirit of glory and of God rests on them. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 1)

1 Peter 4:14 “If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.”

*For righteousness sake* – This easily applies to Jesus who in his persecution even to death reveals God’s salvific working among people. (Scaer p. 90)

**5:11** *blessed are you* – Jesus spoke the first eight beatitudes using the third person [they]. In this final beatitude, He addressed His disciples directly using the second person [you] for emphasis. He continued using “you” until 7:13. (TLSB)

*Pro my account* – The disciple of Jesus will be like him in being Satan’s target. The cause of the believer’s difficulty is Jesus, for whose sake they are persecuted. (Scaer p. 90)

*All kinds of evil against you falsely* – καὶ εἰπῶσιν πᾶν πονηρὸν καθύμῳν [ψευδόμενοι]—The predicate position participle ψευδόμενοι may perhaps express means, telling how people will say every evil against the disciples: “by lying.” (CC)

“Troubles are not always punishments for certain past deeds, but they are God’s works, intended for our benefit, and that God’s power might be made more apparent in our weakness.” [Ap XIIB 63 – TLSB]

In the final analysis, this is the same as the phrase “because of righteousness” (V. 10), since the Christian does right for the sake of Christ (cf. 1 Peter 2:18-23; 3:16-17; 4:14-16). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 1)

**5:12** *rejoice and be glad* – This is the kind of reaction that is described in the definition of the word “Blessed.”

The source of joy for a disciple who suffers persecution is the promise of heaven. (TLSB)

*Reward is great* – Heaven is the ultimate reward. Knowing that we are going to heaven even gives a joy and peace here on earth.

Though Jesus used this term when referring to heavenly blessings, He 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” (Ap V 242). John Hus: “When [a disciple] has patiently continued to endure[,] it helps to purify him as tools [purify] iron, and fire gold, and it helps to increase his reward of beatitude” (*The Church*, p 270). (TLSB)

While this is clearly in the future, it is already a reality in the heavens (God’s presence). (Scaer p. 91)

**The Authority of the Beatitudes: The Gospel Doorway**

Let the one who has ears hear indeed (11:15; 13:9, 43)! As the commentary above on the structure of the Sermon suggested, the shift from third person address (5:3–10) to second person address (5:11–12) shows that the Gospel blessings of the Beatitudes are the “doorway” into the remainder of the Sermon of the Mount (Matthew 5–7). The “they” of Beatitudes 1–8 (5:3–10) becomes the “you” of Beatitude 9 (5:11–12), which is continued in the “you” of the rest of the Sermon through 7:20, referring to those who believe in the promise of present and future blessing that Jesus here teaches with authority. (CC)

To summarize this lengthy treatment of the Beatitudes, they do not make ethical demands, nor do they primarily exhort. They do not refer directly to Jesus himself. Rather, the subject of the main clause in every verse describes those whom Jesus has called to be his disciples. 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.” If one were to ask, “Where is Jesus?” with regard to the first four blessings, the answer would be, “In the ὅτι (‘because ...’) clauses!” Those who have no resources to offer God are nevertheless eschatologically blessed, “because” 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! (CC)

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 the disciples of Jesus today, who are baptized into union with Christ and who comprise his church, which hears and receives the Beatitudes in faith. Indeed, the Beatitudes contain within themselves the kerygmatic power to *make* a hearer or reader into a disciple of Jesus and a member of his church. To hear and believe that one is poor in spirit, spiritually bankrupt, and then to hear Jesus pronounce blessing and the promise of the reign of heaven can make one into a believer in Jesus. Hearing and believing the Beatitudes can also sustain that faith. When life is hard and the power of evil is too great, Jesus’ words comfort us: “The poor in spirit are blessed, because the reign of heaven is theirs!” (5:3). (CC)

At this point, and only at this point, a person is ready to hear the teaching of Jesus in the body proper of the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus’ teaching will continue to have the character of *divine, authoritative revelation*. He reveals truth about the disciples’ calling, about the true meaning of God’s OT Torah, about life under the Father’s care, and so on. Aspects of this truth concern God’s will for man’s obedience. The Sermon contains Law, the commandments of God as Jesus declares them. Sooner or later, that Law, when taken seriously by men and women trying to obey it, will rise up to condemn Jesus’ disciples as guilty, as sinful—as poor in spirit. At those times, Jesus’ disciples are invited to remember that the Sermon has a doorway, a doorway that in the first place swings open on this hinge: “The poor in spirit are blessed, because the reign of heaven is theirs!” (5:3). In this way, perhaps many times in a single day, Jesus’ disciples will receive and enter and accept his authoritative revelation. In the first place (literally!), however, his authoritative revelation is his word of promise, of present blessing and final salvation to all his disciples. (CC)

**5:1–12** 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. • Gracious



Savior, keep my eyes ever focused on You and Your blessings, which are mine by grace alone. Amen.  
(TLSB)