

All Saints  
Matthew 5:1-12

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. May the words of my mouth and the ears of our hearts be open to the word of God this day. AMEN.

So how many of you are saints? Would you say you're a saint? How about you? We hold to the statement of the sainthood of all believers. We say each week that we believe in the "communion of saints", the gathering of all the faithful of every time and place as one community before the throne of God. So are you a saint? Yes? ... Yes!

So how many of you are doing the nine different qualities outlined in our Gospel reading? No, no one. And you call yourselves saints? This list is the exact opposite of what our world and society see as useful, as ideal, as productive and successful. If you were to take Jesus' phrases from Matthew 5:1 - 12, and do the opposite, then you would be doing exactly what society teaches. A world that puts God as secondary to gathering possessions, a world that chooses to put selfish concerns over helping our fellow neighbor. In essence, you would see a world that has no place for God. But Jesus proposes that God's people should do what the world doesn't expect. As Paul says - That is the reason the world does not know us, because it does not know God. We are children, baptized members of Christ's body, and what we will be has not yet been revealed.

The Beatitudes are an important passage to examine again and again because it reminds us of what we are as baptized members of God's family. The list Jesus sets forth flows from beginning to end, each with a present tense and a future tense. Each line builds upon the next. It ties it all together and gives us a common thread, a common view of how we are to act, how we are to think and how we are to react. Each verse builds on the idea of the previous to build a more complete personality picture of what it means to be a follower of Christ, to be a disciple, an apostle, a saint in his eternal family.

But before we get into the list of characteristics we have to look at the word that ties them all together, the word - "blessed." This word continually repeats throughout this message. By itself, this repeating of a word is an indication of the stress that Jesus was placing on these verses. The act of repeating a word, repeating a word, repeating a word, repeating a word, is used to draw your attention to an important part of the message. So when Jesus repeats that word nine times, it must be important. It must have a meaning.

Today we think of blessed as an outward blessing from one person to another. We say, "Have a Blessed Holiday". It's a greeting, a well wish, on someone. When someone sneezes, we say "God Bless you" as if we are wishing a little prayer of good tidings. But Jesus was

stressing how we should act, not simply an outward verbal gift. We must consider that the New Testament was originally written in Greek and not English. In Greek the word “blessed” is not intended to mean outward blessings or well wish, but instead is an inward fulfillment. Another way to look at this Greek word is to define it as “spiritually prosperous and fully satisfied.” This is the joy that comes from being a member of the family of Christ, when John says, “See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called Children of God; and so we are.” He is giving an example of an inward fulfillment, there is no ifs ands or buts, You are a child of God, you are loved. You are blessed, filled with the love of God who claims you as his own. It is not a external well wish, but a fulfillment, a purity, a joy that dwells with in us and grows. It is like our verses here that build one upon another, to be blessed is to be ever evolving in our spiritual life in God’s eternal promise. It is the movement from one spiritual condition to another. As members of the body of Christ, we are all at different spiritual development levels and we are all moving in our spiritual health. These phrases all refer to spiritual health, the condition of our inner being, our spiritual, soulful, heart and mind, as a child of God.

Now realizing that each attribute talks about an inward fulfillment, we can now look at how we are to be fulfilled to live to prosper in the faith, growing in the grace of God. Each of the nine phrases, attributes of a fulfilled Christian, would be worth a sermon each, but I am sure you don’t want to stay here all day. So we will just touch on them briefly.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. The term poor in spirit refers to believers. It refers to those who know they are lacking and helpless, spiritually; they recognize that they must depend on God for help and guidance. In this way, they depend on their Father in heaven and their faith is secure. When taken with the term blessed mentioned earlier, we find that the poor in spirit will be spiritually fulfilled. In short, those who know that only God can provide for their spiritual needs will be taken care of by the one that can bless their souls with salvation. This is describing an attitude towards our heavenly Father. Depend on God and no-other.

In verse 4, the thought continues, building on the idea of poor in spirit. Jesus said “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.” This life is filled with mourning and pain. We know that we are weak and lacking, we know this life isn’t perfect and it is hard, times of sadness and mourning do come. But we know that through Christ we are linked in one communion with the one who overcomes this world, and washes us clean by his sacrifice, fully called to be his children before his everlasting throne. Just as Revelation shows us – “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. The pain and sorrow that we feel here, will disappear when our time comes. Just as the Saints of years past have fallen asleep, they are now experiencing the celebration of God's glory without sorrow, pain or death. We too can expect the same fulfillment by depending on God for comfort in our times of need.

We continue into verse 5: "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth." Now we are not talking about a little mousy meekness, that we normally think of as a meek person. No instead because it is linked with the Blessed word, we know Christ is talking about a spiritual meekness. A meekness that knows that we are submissive to God as our ruler, as Lord of all. We are still to be strong, bold, valiant in the faith, but always mindful that God is the one in charge, not us, our own interests, our thoughts or opinions. In other words, we are to trust in the Lord.

In verse six, we find a reference to pursuit of righteousness. Jesus said "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled" This righteousness is not just goodness, but right standing with God. It is doing God's will rather than following the sinful desires that we all have in our hearts. It is the desire to be holy and the realization that we can not do it on our own, but are depended on God to make us holy, God will fulfill this in us. God is the one who makes us clean. We have to realize we are poor in spirit, that we live in a broken world of sin, that we are helpless without our God and we have to realize that we are fully reliant on God to fulfill our righteousness. Not always the easiest things to remember in a world that tells you that a person is a rock, an Island, their own individual, not needing anyone or anybody.

But as Christians we know that is not true, we are to be merciful, filled with mercy to others as God has shown mercy to us. We are to be pure in heart, filled with goodness, for sin can not stand before the Lord. To see God, to come into God's presence means we are to be free of all sins, nothing separating us from God. We are to be Christians that work for peace, for reconciliation, for connectedness between people, to live in harmony instead of discord, hatred and anger. We are to live in this as Christians, fully reliant on God, for God bestows on us, blesses us, fills us with this spirit, power, righteousness, mercy, purity, and that peace that is everlasting.

And yes living as saintly as possible is not the easiest thing to do, because we still live in a world that does not know God, Just as our second reading says: The world does not know us because it does not know him. And usually what the world does not know or want to know it persecutes and reviles instead.

To live as one of God's saints is not easy. Christ has set a very high standard. But know this, you are a saint in God's church. We stand with all the saints of every time and place, those who have entered ahead of us into that eternal kingdom and with those who are just newly born into this kingdom of God. We stand together as one people, with Christ as our Lord and Savior. We stand with that great multitude before the throne of God, rejoicing in the praise and glory of the Lord, for our reward is not in this world, but in that eternal life that is being fulfilled even now. Rejoice and enjoy the peace which fills you, making you the Lord's child, God's people, The saints eternal. Amen.

MAY THE PEACE AND GRACE OF GOD BE WITH YOU THIS DAY AND  
THROUGHOUT THE WEEK TO COME.