

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.

Today is All Saints Sunday, a day set aside during the year to remember the saints of the Lord and the promises of God. But it also is a day to remember to have patience; patience in the fulfillment of the coming of Christ. To say we need to have patience is easy enough, but in reality patience is very difficult. We want things now, we want that peace, we want that relief from suffering, from fear, from sickness, from need, from mourning but we are reminded today to have patience. This is precisely what we confess as Christians: there is an eternal city, a paradise of God, an eternity of rest and being with the Lord. But we don't have it yet. **We are God's children now, but what we will be has not yet been revealed.** We confess the eternal joys of the life to come while yet struggling in this sin filled world of pain, suffering and death. Do we understand this patience, Yes, and yet we still struggle with it!

It is one of the biggest struggles we face as Christians in this life. We think we should have all of this peace, health and rest right now, because we have been good and listen to God. We don't want to wait. When we are Christians, God should bless and reward us with a lack of problems, relieve us of all pains, put an end to all worries. We trick ourselves into thinking that if we are just good enough, and faithful enough then everything will be fine. Christians shouldn't get sick. Christians shouldn't have trouble paying their bills. Christians shouldn't have problems with their marriages or difficulties raising their children. All of the peace and joy and bliss of heaven ought to be ours immediately, instantly, and right now. But then when these things don't happen, when we feel that God abandoned us and we are all alone, when that sickness is terminal, when we are having problems with our neighbors or other family members, when we are filled with shame or some other vice that over takes our lives, like alcohol, gambling, drugs, abuse, and we feel remorse or despair and we wonder what's wrong. We don't feel much like Christians at those times. Why? Because we have let go of Christ's word. We have let go of the Word of God that has told us about being saints of God.

Christ talks quite clearly what it means to be his followers, to be saints in his family. But most of the time we don't hear because we are looking for the fast quick fulfillment, that instant gratification, that peace we want now. But listen again today to what Christ says: he tells us what the "real life" is like as a Christian **"Blessed are the poor in spirit. For theirs is the kingdom**

of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn; for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. Blessed are the merciful. Blessed are the pure in heart, Blessed are the peacemakers, Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me." All of these Beatitudes that our Lord speaks describe the life of saints in this world, now. Poor in spirit, mourning, meek, hungry, reviled, persecuted. Doesn't sound ideal, but that is what the here and now is like for the saints of God.

Let's be very clear first of all about "saints." A saint is a sacred person, that means set apart as holy, claimed by God in baptism, fed by the Holy Supper filled with the hearing and understanding of the Word of God, receives love and forgiveness and returns that love and forgiveness in everything they do, is surrounded, filled, led and directed by the gift of the Holy Spirit throughout their lives. This is a saint. You are these saints. You are set apart as sacred to God, filled with his Spirit in Baptism, forgiven and offered grace through his sacrament and in his Word. You are his saints.

When we celebrate All Saints Day, we are recognizing that all of us are saints in God's sight through Christ. After all, it is not how we live that makes us saints, but how Christ lived for us, died for us and rose for us. God washing you clean and claiming you in the waters of baptism is what makes you a saint, a sacred person of God's eternal family. The sacrifice of Jesus Christ giving you his body and his blood for the forgiveness of sins is what makes you a saint. The absolution of your sins by God's grace makes you a saint. But also we have to remember that Jesus says those saints, those dear saints, are poor, mourning, harassed, hungering, struggling people now. In this life, the path of sainthood--that is, of being a Christian--is one of hardship and sorrow that does not bring with it the "instant gratification" our world tries to demand of everything else in this world.

Just look again at those beatitudes from Matthew's Gospel. "Blessed are the poor in spirit. For theirs is the kingdom of heaven." "Blessed are those who mourn; for they will be comforted." If you listen closely to the Beatitudes, you hear a description of those who are in Christ. The Beatitudes describe those who have been crushed by God's Law over their sins and have nothing going for them except Christ and His perfect life, death and resurrection for them, and His gifts delivered to them in the Gospel and Sacraments. No one is worthy enough to be prideful, because we all struggle and are empty without the grace of Christ, who gives us his kingdom. We mourn over our sins, our wrongs, our failings, we know we do them, we

know we have lost loved ones and memories that well up in us of unsaid words, unfulfilled loving moments bring us to tears, we cry and mourn and even repent, asking for second chances for those lost moments, of those times when we should have or could have done something, of those moments of ministry of love and caring, and we mourn. This is exactly the type of people the beatitudes describes, those who are troubled by sins, darkened by death, suffering for His Name, and who have no hope to cling too except Jesus Christ and the promise of His future blessings. We have that promise and yet not fully possessing it yet.

It all began with the One who is truly poor in spirit, who gave up everything emptying himself of all things for faith? Who had a poverty of everything and everybody? Jesus Christ. Who is truly a mourner over all those who are lost in sin, in death, and suffering. Who truly makes peace and has mercy on others and who hungers and thirsts for righteousness? Is it not the Christ who did all these things for us, Jesus who hungered and thirsted to bring you righteousness by dying for your sins? He brings about that promise of the kingdom, it is given to us and is real, and yet we are still in need of patience because we wait for that fulfillment to come.

This is the promise of Christ in your Baptism. Being in Christ, as his saints we indeed have everything, but some things have not been given to us just yet. We just have to have patience. We even confess this in our creed, "We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come." It's coming, looking ahead to that time. But it's not here yet. The everlasting city of paradise seen by John in the book of Revelation with its golden streets, its crystal clear waters, and with the Lord Himself as its light: this is the vision of what we will enjoy someday. But for now we have to have patience it is coming, - for now we live in Christ, poor in spirit, mourning, persecuted, and so on. In this life and through it all we hold on to Christ as the One who calls us saints and who goes with us as we journey in this life. Then, in the life to come, we shall see Him as He is, for we will be like Him and we shall live forever in a paradise without fear, darkness, shame, sin, death, pain, suffering or tears. And all of those words of the Beatitudes may come to be fulfilled. May you have joy and hope and most of all patience in that promise that is coming. Amen.

May the Peace and Grace of God be with you this day and throughout the week to come.