**Matthew 5:1-12 November 6, 2022**

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

Our text for this morning comes from our Gospel lesson Matthew chapter 5 here re-reading these words. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." This is our text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It would be a great misunderstanding, if you were to take the words of Matthew 5 and think that they were interpreted the same way by everyone who reads them. Some verses of Scripture are easy enough to understand and have literal meanings. When we read in John 11:35 that "Jesus wept." It's a fairly easy verse to interpret. We take those words to mean, that Jesus literally had tears coming down from his eyes. But the Beatitudes of Matthew 5 are another story. Some interpret Jesus' words of blessing as commands of what they must do in order to be blessed by God. Meaning that in order for you to be blessed, you must be merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers, hungering and thirsting for righteousness, mournful for your wrongs, and willing to suffer persecution for your beliefs. If you can personally carry these crosses in your life and accomplish these tasks, then God will bless you and shower you with a laundry list of specific blessings for each of the things you accomplished. The Beatitudes almost become a series of if-than statements which emphasize what an individual does in order to find favor with God. If you are mournful for your wrongs, than you will receive comfort. If you are merciful towards others, than mercy will be shown to you. If you are pure in heart, and refrain from sin, than you shall see God personally. If you strive to bring peace to the earth than you will be rewarded with the title of son of God. And if you endure persecution than you will be rewarded with the kingdom of heaven, on account of your great endurance. The Beatitudes can easily be distorted into a list of requirements, and a list of rewards. Do this, get that. Jesus is giving to the disciples a great "to do list" after He is gone. But this interpretation seems to completely ignore the one who is speaking to the disciples these words. Where does Jesus fit into this equation? If we are the ones who must do these many different things in order to be blessed, why would we need Jesus at all?

The truth is, the Beatitudes are not talking about anything that we must do in order to receive blessings from God and receive from him eternal life. The Beatitudes are a reminder of the one who experienced all of the hardships of this life on our account, and how He has redeemed us and given us new life. They are themselves a revelation of the love of God, in Jesus Christ, and how he showers us with blessings when we in no way deserve them.

The reality of Matthew 5 is that in this life, there are those who are poor, who are mourning, who are meek, who are hungry and thirsty for righteousness, who are in need of mercy, and especially those who are persecuted, reviled and ridiculed all for bearing the name of Jesus Christ. That is the reality of this world. Pain. Pain is a reality that we all live with each and every single day. Whether it is the physical pain of an illness that slows us down and reminds us of our weakness, or it is the emotional pain of depression and loneliness, we all suffer pain every day of our lives. This world is filled with pain, pain we experience from personal affliction and pain brought on by the anger and resentment of those around us. We live in pain.

Anger and hate lead to a pain that we wish to inflict upon others. And pain leads to sin. Pain leads to despair and abandoning God and His promises of comfort and peace. And especially today, we remember the pain we all feel at the loss of a loved one. On All Saints Day, we look back, and remember those who have gone before us, and in our minds it can lead to us, revisiting the pain that we felt at their loss. (We have lost 7 members of our church here at Trinity this past year, 2 within the past few weeks so that pain is very fresh, but to remember them on All Saints Sunday, can stir up the pain we felt after losing them, and also the pain that still lingers from the loss of other loved ones in our lives. Perhaps the pain has never gone away, and we are still in mourning, mourning that they are no longer with us. The devil wants nothing more than for us to give in to that sadness and pain, to believe that there is nothing else after this life, and to believe that pain and sadness is what God wants for all of us. The devil, wants nothing more, than for us to despair in our mourning, and our meekness, to despair when we are in need of mercy and believe that mercy will never come. The devil wants us to see this world filled with war, violence, and anger and believe that peace is impossible. The devil wants us to see the persecution of the Church as a warning for anyone who dares spread the Gospel. He wants us to think that there is no relief to the pain of this world. He wants us to despair and abandon the only source of comfort we have.

But in the face of all that the devil wants for us we hear the words of Jesus Christ. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." The poor in spirit, being the ones, who know that of their own strength and power, they cannot escape the pain of sin and the sadness of this sinful world. The poor in spirit, being the ones who repent of their sins and come to God in humility, casting their cares upon Him, and relegating themselves to the place of a beggar. Humility and repentance, that is how one receives the kingdom of heaven. Because we worship and adore the one, who humbled himself to the point of taking on human flesh, and walking the road of righteousness in our place. Jesus Christ, humbled himself to be born, to be a human, to be born of a virgin, all out of love for us, and He did it when the kingdom of heaven was already His, in order that it would be ours as well.

And in our sadness and mourning, we look to the one, who mourned at the loss of His friend Lazarus. We worship and adore the Son of God; Jesus Christ, who stood outside of the tomb of Lazarus and wept. On account of sin, death is a reality in this world. Death is separation, and death is pain. And we do not believe in a God who is completely separated from our sadness. We do not worship a God who turns a deaf ear to our cries of mourning, but we have a God who wept and knows our pain. We have a God who loves us and comforts us. We have a God who comforts us with the reality of why He came into this world, and that was to destroy death.

Today, we remember those who have gone before us. We remember them, and we mourn their passing, because they are no longer with us. But we have the comfort and assurance of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We have been studying heaven these past few weeks in our Life light study, especially looking at the reality of our loved ones who have gone to heaven. Describing heaven in earthly ways doesn’t make sense. Because we have bodies that get sick and old. We wear clothes that are dirty and defiled. Instead we see just a small picture of the joy that our loved ones are experiencing in the presence of God. They are now clothed in the righteousness of Jesus Christ, clothed in white robes and standing before the throne of God. They are in a place where they shall neither hunger, nor thirst ever again. For them there are no more tears, there is no more pain. They are forever in the presence of the Lamb of God.

But have you ever thought about what your loved ones do in heaven? Many times we see it depicted kind of as a perfect version of Earth. So if Grandma loved to bake or knit that’s probably what she’s doing in heaven. If Grandpa loved to go golfing he’s probably golfing in heaven. We focus on what made us happy here on Earth and logically apply it to heaven because it’s a place of happiness. But those thoughts really detract from the Biblical picture and they change the focus of heaven to being all about us, rather than all about God.

The main central point of heaven, is Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God. A Lamb, in those days, was sacrificed in order to cleanse the sins of the people. And in the same way, we worship and adore the one who experienced the pain of ridicule, who experienced the persecution of the people all for righteousness's sake. Jesus Christ was persecuted to the point of death, and had evil shouted against him, all for our sake and so that we would be citizens, of the kingdom of heaven. He humbled himself to the point of death, in order that we would never die eternally.

The Beatitudes are revelations for us of the amazing work of Jesus Christ in His ministry, and how when we experience pain in this life, we are drawn closer to God. Jesus tells us at the end of the Beatitudes to rejoice and be glad in our persecution and pain, because our reward is great in heaven. Our reward is the peace and comfort that our loved ones are experiencing. Our reward is waiting for us, when we leave, this life of pain. And the reward is greater than a never expiring golf pass, it’s better than knitting needles that don’t wear out. Our reward is the worship of the Lamb that will bring happiness that we can only imagine.

The Beatitudes are not a list of requirements for us to fulfill in order to be blessed by God and saved on account of our works, but they are themselves a reminder for us of the blessings that are ours when we experience pain in this world. For when we mourn, we are comforted, with the knowledge of eternal life that was won for us on the cross. When we are meek, and humble, we inherit this world, because Christ came in humility and destroyed sin. When we hunger and thirst for righteousness we are satisfied, because we come into His house and are adopted as His children through the waters of Holy Baptism. We are fed, with His body and His blood in with and under the bread and wine in Holy Communion. And we are satisfied with His Word, that comforts us with His promises and reveals to us our salvation, in the person and work, of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

So this day, as we look back upon the faithful saints who have gone on before us, let us rejoice in the victory that Christ has won over death. Rejoice in the eternal life that they now experience. Rejoice in the life that waits for us when we die. And in all things, Rejoice for the Lamb of God, who takes away our pain in this world, and comforts us with life everlasting.

Amen.

The peace of God which surpasses all human understanding keep our hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen.