

Order of Worship for November 5, 2023

Prelude –

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

Opening Hymn – “For All the Saints” – Hymn #677 (vs. 1-6)

Confession and Absolution – pg. 151 Service of the Word

Entrance Psalm:

P: These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation.

C: They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

P: In You, O LORD, do I take refuge; let me never be put to shame;

C: in Your righteousness deliver me.

P: For you are my rock and my fortress;

C: and for Your name’s sake You lead me and guide me.

P: Into Your hand I commit my spirit;

C: You have redeemed me, O LORD, faithful God.

ALL: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning is now, and will be forever. Amen.

P: These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation.

C: They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Kyrie (*Lord, Have Mercy*) – pg. 152

Hymn of Praise (“*This Is the Feast*”) (11:00) – pg. 155

Salutation – pg. 156

Collect

P: Almighty and everlasting God, You knit together Your faithful people of all times and places into one holy communion, the mystical body of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Grant us so to follow Your blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living that, together with them, we may come to the unspeakable joys You have prepared for those who love You; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **C: Amen.**

First Lesson – Revelation 7:9–17

R: 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, and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” 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, saying, “Amen!”

Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.” Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, “Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?” 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.

“Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in his temple; and He who sits on the throne will shelter them with His presence. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. 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.”

R: This is the Word of the Lord **C: Thanks be to God.**

Epistle Lesson – 1 John 3:1–3

R: 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. 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. And everyone who thus hopes in Him purifies himself as He is pure.

R: This is the Word of the Lord. **C: Thanks be to God.**

Alleluia and Verse – pg. 156

Holy Gospel – Matthew 5:1-12

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the 5th chapter.

C: (sung) Glory to You, O Lord.

P: Seeing the crowds, [Jesus] went up on the mountain, and when He sat down, His disciples came to Him. And He opened His mouth and taught them, saying:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on My account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

P: This is the Gospel of our Lord.

C: (sung) Praise to You, O Christ.

Sermon Hymn: “*Jesus sat with His Disciples*” – **Hymn #932**

Sermon: “*Blessed by God*” - **Matthew 5:1-12**

We’ve all heard those “good news-bad news” jokes.

Doctor: I have some good news and bad news.

Patient: Ok, well... Give me the good news first.

Doctor: You have 24-Hours to live.

Patient: How is that good news?!? What's the bad news then??

Doctor: I've been trying to call you since yesterday.

But there are also real life “bad news—good news” events. You come to an 8 AM class for a test. You were up late cramming for it. Then you see a notice on the door to the classroom that says, “Dr. Jones is ill today. The Chem 171 test for today has been postponed until next week.” No test today!

That’s good news. You have grace time to better prepare for the test. But that could also be bad news for you if you have two other big tests next week. It would be better for you to have taken the chemistry test and have it out of your mind when you cram for those other tests. And it can be frustrating to have stayed up late and then dragged yourself out of bed only to find that the test is not this morning. The good news isn’t so good.

How, then, do we see the words Jesus said to begin His famous “Sermon on the Mount”? Jesus says blessed are the poor in spirit, the meek, those who are mourning, those who hunger and thirst, and those who are persecuted. To those people His words can seem very precious. But if our lives are pretty much in order, then those words can be unsettling. We can almost wonder that the only way to truly receive God’s blessings is if we are down and out, if we don’t have our act together, and if our lives are messed up. Think about it. Do we want to be mourning, poor, and persecuted so that we can be blessed? And if we aren’t, does that mean that we truly aren’t blessed?

What further complicates things is when we consider that the word, “blessed” can also be translated, “happy.” How can anyone in their right mind be happy in suffering, poverty, and persecution? How can that be a blessing?

The words of our text were chosen as the Gospel lesson for All Saints Day, which we celebrate today. All Saints was originally set up to remember those who were killed because they were Christians. We call those people “martyrs.” What often comes to our minds are the people who were thrown to the lions’ den and the gladiators. They died, not screaming in panic, but in joy, celebrating that they had the honor to die for their faith in Christ. We also think of saints like Peter and Paul who boldly preached Christ, even though they were tortured, imprisoned, and killed because of it. I have had people ask me about the symbols around the clock in our lounge. Those symbols represent the apostles of Jesus. There is a symbol with a set of keys and an up-side-down cross. It is the symbol for Peter. The keys represent how Jesus said to Peter and all of us that He has given us the keys of the Kingdom—the power to forgive or not to forgive sins. The up-side-down cross reflects how, according to tradition, Peter died. He insisted that the cross he was nailed to be put up-side-down, because he did not consider himself worthy to die the way Jesus died. Those saints’ lives, and even more their deaths, seem to show the fulfillment of Jesus’ Beatitudes—“Happy are you when men revile and persecute you.” But do we want that? Would we ourselves be happy in the face of persecution? Would we consider that blessed? Would we consider them or any who mourn their loss happy?

We could say that many of the stories of saints like Peter and Paul are garnished with tradition. Many of those stories probably are. But in our own age people still die rejoicing in the face of persecution and suffering. More people lost their faith for the Christian faith in the 20th century than all the previous 19 centuries combined. The 21st century doesn't seem any better. One in seven Christians live under some form of persecution. Over 62% of people in the world live in places with restrictions of religious beliefs. Nala is a Christian who had to flee his home country of Somalia in East Africa. He says, "When I got home, the men in my family were waiting for me. They beat me and took my mobile phone and they locked me up in a room. They said, 'We have heard that you are corrupted,' but they have never once used the word 'Christian.'" But is that what we are looking for? Do we see happiness in that? Do we want to be "blessed?"



During the Middle Ages people sought happiness by trying to deny themselves the pleasures of life. They went to monasteries so that they could be poor, hungry, and meek. That way they felt that God would bless them. Is that what we should do—seek happiness by renouncing wealth, looking for persecution, and by making ourselves as meek and poor as we can? Is that how we become blessed?

Lutheran scholar Martin Franzman said of Matthew's Gospel that it is the Gospel of "extreme cases." What Matthew is most extreme about is God's grace. Right after the Sermon on the Mount Matthew's Gospel tells us in chapter 8 that Jesus healed three "extreme case" people—a leper who was considered hopeless and outcast by the Old Testament law, a Gentile's servant, and a woman (in those days a woman was considered a second-class person). Jesus' actions reflect the extreme nature of the promise He gives in the Beatitudes. God's blessings have no limitations—He reaches out to even the most extremely hopeless. And because God is extreme, the acceptance and love that He wants to work in us is extreme. As God's grace has no limits, we too can remove the limits to the love and acceptance we show to others. That is what it means to be blessed.

Since God's grace has no limits, then we can see what Jesus is trying to tell us in the Beatitudes. Happiness doesn't come from extreme wealth or extreme poverty, from a smooth-sailing life or one burdened with pain. Happiness and blessedness are not what we find or gain. They are what God gives to us.

Notice the groups that Jesus lists in the Beatitudes—“the poor in spirit,” “those who mourn,” “the meek,” “those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.” These aren’t just any poor, meek, or hungry. These are all categories listed in the Old Testament. These are people who looked for comfort in God’s chosen Savior, the Messiah. They are those who centered their lives on God’s promises.

Jesus isn’t saying, “Become poor, be meek, and find something to mourn about so that you can be truly blessed.” No, since Christ has come into our lives, then we can be truly happy and blessed in all situations—even the “extreme cases.” As Paul said in Philippians, “I have learned in whatever state I am to be content. I know how to be abused and I know how to abound; in all and any circumstance I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and want. I can do all things in Him who strengthens me.”

We close our worship services with what we call the “Benediction.” That word means “to speak a blessing.” The two benedictions we normally use are, “The Lord bless you and keep you . . .” and “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ . . .” If you look at either of those blessings, the English sounds a little strange. It may seem a lot more comfortable saying, “May the Lord bless you and keep you . . .” and “May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ . . .” You might remember Red Skelton closing his TV show with the words, “And may God bless.” What we are saying then is that we hope God will bless us. But when the pastor says the Benediction, he faces the congregation. He says, “The Lord bless you,” not, “The Lord bless us.” It is not his blessing to the people, but God’s. If I were to say to you, “May it go well with you,” I would have to use the word, “may.” I can’t say for certain that it will. But when God speaks His blessing to us, it is never “may.” That is why Jesus said in the Beatitudes, “Blessed,” not “May you be blessed.” Are we blessed? Yes we are because that is what God promises to us. The same God who definitely sent His Son to die for us on the cross is the God who definitely blessed us.

“Am I blessed?” That is no longer the question for us. The question is now, “Do I want that blessing?” If I don’t want God at the center of my life, then Jesus’ Beatitudes are a threat to us. They make me squirm. They make me feel unsettled. But when God is at the center, then Jesus promises to us in all situations, in even the “extreme cases”, that He will be with us. He will bless us. That is the real happiness—not that I always walk around with a smile on my face, but that my life is centered on God. God bless you.

Stewardship Message

Apostle’s Creed (inside back cover of hymnal)

Prayer of the Church

(P: Lord in Your mercy;

C: Hear our prayer.)

Sharing Our Ministry

Offering & Voluntary –

Offertory (“*What Shall I Render to the Lord*”) – pg. 159-60

Service of the Sacrament

Preface – pg. 160

P: It is truly good, right, and salutary that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to You, holy Lord, almighty Father, everlasting God. In the communion of all Your saints gathered into the one body of Your Son, You have surrounded us with so great a cloud of witnesses that we, encouraged by their faith and strengthened by their fellowship, may run with perseverance the race that is set before us and, together with them, receive the crown of glory that does not fade away. Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven we laud and magnify Your glorious name, evermore praising You and singing:

Sanctus (*Holy, Holy, Holy*) – pg. 161

Prayer of Thanksgiving:

P:

Lord’s Prayer and The Words of the Lord – pg. 162

Pax Domini (*The Peace of the Lord*) and **Agnus Dei** (*Lamb of God*) – pg. 163

Distribution Hymns

“*Behold A Host, Arrayed in White*” – **Hymn #676**

“*We Sing for All the Unsung Saints*” – **Hymn #678**

Dismissal

Song After Communion: (*Thank the Lord*) – pg. 164

Prayer After Communion:

P: Let us pray. Gracious God, our heavenly Father, You have given us a foretaste of the feast to come in the Holy Supper of Your Son’s body and blood. Keep us firm in the true faith throughout our days of pilgrimage that, on the day of His coming, we may, together with all Your saints, celebrate the marriage feast of the Lamb in His kingdom which has no end; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

Blessing: – pg. 165

Closing Hymn – “*For All the Saints*” – **Hymn #677** (vs. 7-8)

Postlude –