

All Saints' 2020
Matthew 5:1-12

BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT, FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

The saints at rest in heaven are surrounding the throne of God and are before the Lamb, praising God with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" (Re 7:10). And they are not alone in singing their praises. The angels and archangels and the elders and the four living creatures all join with them in worshipping God, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen" (v. 12).

These are the saints who have come out of the great tribulation of earthly life. They are clothed in white robes and hold palm branches in their hands, and look at what they are experiencing,

"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" (vv. 15-17).

The saints at rest in glory shine, but we in the Church Militant struggle. As we feebly struggle, we take great comfort from those words of Jesus, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (v. 3). **THE BLESSED CELEBRATION OF ALL SAINTS CHEERS US THAT WE HAVE NOTHING, YET, IN CHRIST, WE WILL INHERIT EVERYTHING.**

Today, we live in poverty. "Blessed are the 'poor'," Jesus says.

With our human reason and the lies of Satan in our ears, it is often so easy to misunderstand the Scriptures. One summer, I worked at a Bible camp and we would play word games with the kids. You know, What kind of car did the apostles drive? A Honda, because the Bible says, “The disciples were all in one accord” (cf. Ac 2:1). To be clear, the disciples didn’t drive a Honda, but, that shows how easy it is for us to misunderstand the Bible.

How easy it is for us to misunderstand what Jesus is talking about when He says “Blessed are the ‘poor’”. You hear that word, and you immediately think of what? Money, earthly wealth, silver and gold and 401K. You even want to do your best Rodney Dangerfield impersonation, “I was so poor growing up, I couldn’t even pay attention”.

Jesus is not talking about money, silver or gold or your bank account. He is talking about the death of your sin. Remember what God promised Adam and Eve? “For in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Ge 2:17). They ate and we died in sin. Which means we are poor, we have nothing to offer God, because we have nothing God needs. He doesn’t need His diaper changed. He doesn’t the snow shoveled from His driveway.

What God demands of us is our fear, our love, and our trust. But yet, when it comes to God and your relationship to Him,

- Do you fear His wrath, such that you avoid sin at all cost?
- Do you expect nothing but good things from God and when things do not go good for you, do you moan and complain and feel sorry for yourself because you are not getting your way?
- When it comes to prayer, do you call upon God in trouble and give thanks for all things, or are you lazy and bored?

- When it comes to God's Word, do you come to worship to hear and learn His Word and come to His Table to eat the life-giving Body and Blood of Jesus, or are you indifferent because there are other places you would rather be?
- Do you despise and freely disobey those God has place in authority over for you, for your own good and protection? Do you see these people as gifts from God?
- Do you lust after someone who is not your God-given spouse?
- Do you respect other people's property?
- Do you share and repeat gossip, rumors, and innuendos, or are you always ready to defend your neighbor and explain everything in the kindest way?
- Are you satisfied with everything God has given you or do you look at what your neighbor has been given and say, "that looks a whole lot better than what I have!"

In the poverty of your sin, you have nothing to offer God. You have nothing God needs. You cannot even give to God the fear, love, and trust that He demands of you.

And yet, here you are on this All Saints, joining your voice with those "standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands," singing the same words they sing, "Blessing, honor, glory, and might be to God and the Lamb forever," as you did in the hymn of praise today (cf. Re 7:9, 12). How is it that someone as poor as you in the poverty of your sin can join your voice to sing with the angels, the archangels, and all the company of heaven?

The answer: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven". It's all about Jesus, and how blessed you are in your Beautiful

Savior! In the poverty of your sin, you have nothing but death and hell, but in Jesus, you have everything, even the very crown of life in heaven.

Jesus became true man, born of the Virgin Mary, and at His Baptism, He was anointed with the Holy Spirit, to proclaim Good News to the poor in their sin. "The Spirit of the LORD GOD is upon Me, because the LORD has anointed Me to bring good news to the poor," is how the Prophet Isaiah says it (Is 61:1). And that's what He did in the Sermon on the Mount, to the paralytic, Jairus, the Canaanite woman, Zacchaeus, the Samaritan woman at the well, Mary and Martha as they grieved the death of their brother, and to you this very day.

That Good News is this: He was anointed to take all your sin upon Himself you and the sin of all the world, to suffer under Pontius Pilate, be crucified, die, and be buried, and rise again the 3rd day. Because He did that, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," because He has won for you the riches of the kingdom of God's grace.

The celebration of All Saints comforts and cheers us that the day is coming when you will rest from all of your struggles in heaven and stand among that great multitude before the throne of God and before the Lamb, and God will wipe all the tears from your eyes. But today, you know all too well, Dear Saint of God, that you feebly struggle.

I saw a great cartoon the other day. There was the ice cream truck, playing the ice cream truck music, and written on big, bold letters on the side of that truck were the words, "LIVER AND ONIONS". Bear with me on a note of pessimism, but in 2020, we heard the music, saw the ice cream truck, and thought we were getting ice cream, but instead we got liver and onions. I know, I know, there are some of you like my Dad, who actually

like liver and onions, so you can have mine, and I think can speak for many when I say, you can have theirs as well.

But, even as you feebly struggle, you are blessed in Christ Jesus. You have had the riches of the kingdom of God's grace poured over you in the waters of your baptism. You have the riches of the kingdom of God's grace fill your ears and your heart with the words of eternal life. You have the riches of the kingdom of God's grace as you eat Christ's Body and drink Christ's Blood.

When the fight is fierce, and the warfare long,
Steals on our ears the distant triumph song,
And hearts are brave again, and arms are strong (*LSB 677:5*).

"Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven" (v. 12).