

**Sermon for November 2, 2014**  
**Matthew**

Blessed are . . . you fill in the blank; entertainers, athletes, musicians, millionaires. You know the people who have a lot of money and a lot of stuff. These are the people we think are blessed; certainly not the people that Jesus mentions in today's Gospel reading: the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, the merciful, the poor in heart, the peacemakers, and certainly not the persecuted. But in God's topsy-turvy world these are the blessed ones; not as something that we need to become, but because we already are.

Since today is All Saints' Sunday and we are remembering those who have gone before us; it seems appropriate to talk about those who mourn. Especially since mourning isn't a topic most people want to talk about in today's world. Some exclude it so much that they aren't having public funerals anymore where friends and extended family can come and mourn the loss of someone they were fond of and celebrate their life among us. We're supposed to as the song says, "Be Happy."

It's alright to mourn the loss of someone we knew and loved, but at the same time we celebrate the fact that they are now part of the church triumphant—they are the ones who have washed their robes white in the blood of the Lamb. But mourning is more than the loss of a loved one. Loss comes from many places and it deserves our notice and our comfort.

It can come from saying good-bye to family and friends as you leave to start a new job in a place far from home. As too many of you know it comes from

watching someone dear to us slowly succumb to Alzheimer's or dementia. It comes when we lose the functions of our bodies such as our sight or hearing or mobility and we can't do the things that we used to be able to do. It comes from losing our job and dignity. It comes from the never ending care of a special needs child and the loss of the hopes and dreams we had for that child. It comes from having to put our dreams on hold or let go of them entirely.

As we talked last week in our learning hour we discussed how the saints are not just those who have died, but they are all of us who are disciples of Christ. So as we face our ordeals and struggle to find hope and healing the promise of Jesus to us in our Revelation passage provides us with hope and healing: "They will hunger no more, and thirst no more; the sun will not strike them, nor any scorching heat; for the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of the water of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

What a promise! The great thing about promises is that they don't just describe things, but they actually have the capacity to create the reality they name. I think back to when my nieces and nephews were younger. If I made a promise to them to do something, even if were to be weeks or months later—they remembered it and reminded me of my promise to them! Promises look beyond the now and into the future; they set things into motion. When we are stuck in our grief and pain there is little energy given to imagination. It's hard for us to move towards a future that isn't dominated by our pain. But as we listen to Christ's

promises to us we can hope; we can begin to walk towards a future that isn't defined by our past.

With this promise we can realize that we are blessed, right here, right now in the midst of everything we're going through. Especially when we realize that blessing doesn't act like a vaccination that will keep away pain or loss. It isn't a get through life unscathed card. It is a sense of fullness, of being content with what we have, a joy that can transcend happiness—or as Paul would write, “A peace that passes all understanding.”

All of this doesn't come from us, but it is our response to the love and promises given to us from another. God sees us and what is happening in our lives. God sees the grief and burdens that we bear, the things that oppress and challenge us. God sees us, God honors us and God blesses us, God walks with us. When the world tells us that we are nothing and leaves us alone; God says, “No, you are my beloved child. I have sent my Son to die for you, to bring you back to me. I walk alongside of you; picking you up when you fall, listening to your doubts and struggles, whispering encouragement to you. I promise you that this will not last forever and I will wipe every tear from your eyes.”