

Sermon for All Saints' Sunday

2 November 2025

Daniel 7:1-3, 15-18; Psalm 149; Ephesians 1:11-23; Luke 6:20-31

Words from the Gospel:

“Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.”

“Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled.”

“Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.”

“Blessed are you when people hate you... on account of the Son of Man.”

Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven.

In the Name of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

When we meet Jesus in this morning's Gospel reading, Luke tells us that he's just spent the night out on a mountain top praying, and at daybreak has chosen his twelve disciples; coming down the mountain with them to stand “on a level place” surrounded by crowds who'd come from all over the place to be healed and to have evil spirits cast out. And it's here, surrounded by crowds that Jesus lifts his eyes towards his disciples and says, “Blessed are you.”

Luke's recounting of the Beatitudes mirrors and also contrasts with the version told in Matthew's Gospel. In Matthew, Jesus ascends a mountain — echoing Moses — and proclaims nine blessings, including “Blessed are the poor in spirit.” In contrast, Luke's scene is flatter and more communal: Jesus stands among the people and offers four blessings and four woes; and Luke's Beatitudes are earthy, direct, and physical. “Blessed are you who are poor,” not “poor in spirit.” “Blessed are you who hunger now,” not those who hunger for righteousness.

This is because Luke's focus is not on interior piety, but on God's transformation of the real conditions of human life. And in contrast to

Matthew, who only offers blessings, Luke pairs his Beatitudes with four woes “Woe to you who are rich...who are full now...” — which makes the point that God’s kingdom overturns human hierarchies even more forcefully. In Luke’s Gospel, Jesus does not spiritualize poverty, but instead blesses the actual poor and challenges those who wealth blinds them to the needs of their neighbours.

On All Saints Sunday, this vision sets the stage for how we understand sainthood; an understanding that rejects saints as solely being people of high moral achievement or mystical detachment, and instead understands sainthood as sharing the level ground where Jesus blesses the brokenhearted and hungry. The Beatitudes are not statements of congratulation, speaking of reversal instead of reward. They reveal a strange grammar of holiness — the reality that those who seem left behind by society are in fact closest to the heart of God.

Our reading from Ephesians picks up this same theme — Paul writes not to saints already perfect, but to ordinary Christians “sealed with the promised Holy Spirit;” people are holy not because they’ve mastered virtuous living, but because they belong to Jesus Christ. This reveals a truth about sainthood — that is a vocation grounded in grace. Saints are those who have discovered — sometimes amidst pain and strife — that God’s kingdom begins where our human resources end; and holiness is not the absence of human weakness, but the courage to let that weakness be redeemed by God.

When Jesus blesses the poor and warns the rich, he’s not romanticizing poverty or condemning wealth as such; in the same way as in last week’s readings, the publican wasn’t canonized and the Pharisee condemned. Instead, he’s declaring that the tables are turned in God’s kingdom — that in God’s kingdom those who have nothing discover everything; and that those who hoard abundance may find it empty. This is why well-known saints appear so free in accounts of their lives: they’ve discovered joy in relationship with God; a joy that is not contingent on human success or

approval. St. Francis of Assisi found freedom in giving everything away; Mother Teresa found joy among the dying, believing that in order to live well we must each die daily, emptying ourselves so that God can fill us more fully with his love. The last death, she wrote, was an “easy one, a natural gradation where at last we are completely empty and can reawaken, fully known in [God’s] image.”

But the Communion of Saints is not merely a list of glorious dead — it is a living fellowship of all people whom Christ has gathered into his mercy: people who now behold him face to face, and those of us still learning.

In every Eucharist we proclaim that “with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven” we join in their unending praise of God. In that moment the veil between heaven and earth grows thin; and we are reminded that the saints are not distance, but indeed are our fellow worshippers. What unites us with them is God’s mercy and grace — the same mercy that gathered the poor of Galilee gathers us around this altar, and nourishes us with the same grace.

A few verses after today’s reading, Jesus ends this part of the Sermon on the Plain with the command, “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.” Be merciful. This is the pattern of sainthood. To love our enemies; to bless those who curse us; to give without expecting anything in return — these are not heroic exceptions, but the daily work of holy living. Indeed, every time we forgive, or act with kindness towards one who cannot reply, we join the company of the saints.

In our reading from Ephesians, Paul prays that the “eyes of your heart may be enlightened.” To see that true power is found in deep and abiding love; that real wealth is found in boundless compassion; and that the resurrection light shines already in human weakness. All Saints Sunday invites us to share in that vision — to recognize the hidden blessedness in those who weep, who hunger, or who struggle; and to honour Christ in the faces of

those the world forgets; and to remember that every act of mercy, no matter how small, participates in the holiness of God.

Paul continues, that each of us have received “an inheritance” — which is not a private reward, but a shared participation in Christ’s risen life, according to the working of God’s great power. The saints on the other side already swell in that fullness; while we who yet struggle journey towards it. To live as heirs of that inheritance is to live eucharistically — to receive everything as a gift, to give thanks, to trust in the hope of the resurrection, and to be broken open of the life of the world. The blessed and broken bread on the altar is the perfect sign of the blessed and broken Church gathered around it.

This morning as we remember the Communion of Saints, we remember our own belonging as members of Christ’s body. Around this altar, we are joined to that vast company — the blessed and broken; the famous and the forgotten; those who are renowned of their contributions to the Christian life and those whose names are known only to God. Their prayers uphold us; and their joy awaits us. The saints are not distant stars, but nearby candles, each lit from the same Paschal flame. Their light is meant to kindle ours and to encourage us in our earthly pilgrimage.

So on this All Saints Sunday, let us give thanks for the Communion of the Blessed and the Broken — for those whose lives pointed and point to Christ, revealing divine mercy and grace; for those saints in our own lives whose love still shapes us; and for the grace that makes saints of sinners.

And let us pray, with Paul, that “the eyes of our hearts may be enlightened,” that we may know “the hope to which he has called us,” and that, when our pilgrimage is done, we may join the saints in light, in the eternal blessedness of the Kingdom of Heaven.

May God give us grace to find it so. Amen.