

All Saints Sunday (A)

November 1, 2020



But this is what it means: If you will not have the gospel or be a Christian, then go and be a worldling, and nobody will persecute you, and you will be a friend of the world. But if you will have the gospel and Christ, then you must expect to have trouble, contention and persecution wherever you go.

- Martin Luther -

Sermon on the Beatitudes

PROCLAMATION POINTS

The following are some thoughts and questions to be used for a text study on the weekly lessons, or for jump-starting the imagination of the preacher and hearer in preparing for the proclamation event.

Revelation 7: (2-8) 9-17

The vision given to John is one of the saints from all nations gathered around the throne of the Lamb of God. The servants of God were to be sealed on their foreheads before they gathered around the throne. They were dressed in white and sang praises to God as the angels stood at attention. The good news for all who heard this message was that there would come a time when there will be no more hunger or thirst; a time when God promised to wipe away every tear.

- *What consolation does this passage give you as you think about life, death, the loss of loved ones, and your own future with Christ?*
- *In what sense is this prophetic picture already true among us as we gather together to worship God? How have we already been “washed white” by the blood of the Lamb?*

The words of praise found in verse 7:12 (and other places in Revelation) are echoed in the traditional doxology at the end of the Lord’s Prayer: “For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.”

- *What does “forever and ever” mean to you? Why is this central to our understanding of God and the promise he has made to us?*
- *Why is All Saints Sunday such an important day in the life of the church? What hope does it bring to the worshipping community and to individual people?*

Psalm 149

The psalmist cried out for all to sing praises to the Lord in the assembly of believers. Singing is a vital part of worship. By raising our voices in praise to our Lord, we are confessing our faith. When we sing, we also have more time to think about God – what he has done for us, how he loves us, and what he is calling us to be and do. We learn more of the Scriptures by heart through singing, thanks to those hymn writers who put their faith into music.

Singing also has a wonderful effect on our minds and bodies. It lowers stress hormones in our bodies and helps us relax. It increases oxygen in our lungs and thus to our brains. Overall it simply makes us feel better. So when we sing our praises to God, he hears our thanks and worship, and we also benefit physically and spiritually.

- *When you think of the benefits of singing praises to God, does it make you appreciate more about how we are fearfully and wonderfully made? (Psalm 139:14)*
- *Does singing in general make you feel good? How does singing*

to the Lord compare to other types of singing?

- *During the Covid-19 pandemic, in what ways was worship at your church altered? Was there singing? If not, how did that affect your communal praise, if at all?*

1 John 3:1-3

In these verses, John drew a distinction between those who belong to Christ and those who are a part of the world. The word “we” refers to fellow believers in Christ. When Christ returns, John says that “we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is” (v. 2).

- *Why don’t those who are a part of the “world” see Jesus as he is? What is missing in their sight?*
- *Compare this to what Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 13:8-12. Throughout our earthly lives, in what sense do we only know Jesus in part and not in full? In what sense does the promise rest in the fact that we are “fully known” by God?*

Matthew 5:1-12

Jesus challenges our earthly assumptions of what being blessed or happy really means. According to Jesus, those who are in the best places in life are those who are most in need of recognizing God in their lives. When we are down and out there is more room for Christ to enter into our lives and support us. He wants us to lean on him always, but when we are strong, we often find it harder to do so. This is nothing new! Sin today is the same as it was in the Garden of Eden – humanity striving for total control over all aspects of our lives. The paradox of Jesus’ teaching is that it is only when we have lost all control and are willing to allow Jesus to love and care for us, to take over our lives, do we find true *makarios* (happiness/ blessedness).

- *How do we often get this “happiness” thing wrong in our culture of self-centeredness? Why do we think being happy concerns all that what we possess?*
- *We are often told to “count our blessings.” Why do we look at trials and struggles as everything other than being blessed?*
- *In terms of faith, why would being in need be a good thing?*

Jesus’ words cover the whole gamut of human trials: grief, loneliness, obedience, peace-making, and even persecution. Some of these things are done to us and some of them are simply aspects of life.

- *Which of the Beatitudes have you experienced first-hand? Which one has been the most difficult? The most joyful?*