

Listening for the Promise

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

All Saints Sunday – November 1, 2020

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.”

– Matthew 5:1–3 –

Jesus said a lot of things that are contrary to what we might expect if we didn't know him. We come to know him better and better as we dwell in the Holy Scriptures and let his words, like the teachings from the Sermon on the Mount here in Matthew, wash over us. When we were “in the world” (1 John 4:5) these words of his made no sense to us, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, the merciful, and the persecuted.” But now that we are in Christ, they make all kinds of sense.

I don't know about you, but I'm guessing you haven't always felt particularly blessed when you were grieving or when you were trying to help others work out their issues, when you were being criticized for your faith or when you felt empty and yearned for more of God. But the truth of Jesus' words begins to make more sense to us the closer he draws us near, and when we are struggling is the precise time when he draws us the closest. Strange how we realize how much we need Jesus in times of trouble! In times of plenty and peace, we get so comfortable that we fail to reach for Jesus. That's exactly why Jesus says what he says! You will be blessed when you are down and out, when your life is turned upside down, when you don't know which way to go... then and only then are we ready for more of Jesus.

Someone may have told you all of this sometime in your life, and if you're like me, you probably didn't listen or understand. But when it happens, when you find yourself on the receiving end of sorrow, pain, spite, and even evil, then you come to understand what Jesus was speaking about. Why do we always have to learn the hard way? (Stubborn and prideful people that we are!:) But knowing how Jesus turns everything around means that when trouble comes next time, and it will come, we can recall our Lord's words and know for certain that our blessings are coming! He will draw us close to him, he will care for our wounded souls and helpless bodies, and he will remind us of his never failing love for us. Amen.

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