**Blessed Are You!**

**Matthew 5:1-12**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

So, how many of you would like to be described with some of the terms used in our text?

Would you like to be called poor in spirit? That whole concept of being poor gets in the way. Would you like to be considered one who is mourning? Probably not, because it would mean that someone close to you has just died, not usually something which most people enjoy.

While meekness might be a good attribute, too often the meek are seen as people who are often walked all over.

If you are hungry and thirsty, it means you are not well fed. Even if being hungry and thirsty for righteousness is a good thing, to think we are without in any way is not a pleasant thought.

Of this entire list, maybe being merciful is the one that immediately comes to mind as being a positive descriptive quality. Of course, some people worry about being too merciful, afraid that others might take advantage of that attribute.

We think that innocence is something lost at a young age, who is there left who is pure in heart – and let’s face it, born in sin, there are none who were ever innocent – even in infancy. In this day, even our youngsters are sick and tired of the advertisements for politicians, their purity has been tainted by the seedy side of politics, the mud-slinging. Their innocence tainted further by the bickering over what is right and what is wrong in regard to the response to COVID. It is too bad that they have to suffer through the hatred and animosity they see around them because of the fervor around differences people image in the human race, all because of skin color.

We would all like peace – in many and various places – from globally, to our homes, to our communities, states, and country. Too often we wonder, what can I do to bring it about? Instead of a global picture, maybe we ought to consider how we can be a peacemakers in relation to the “communities” we impact

How many of you would like to be listed among those who are persecuted? Persecution for any reason, even because of righteousness, is not something most people hurry and get in line to endure. Nor are there many who want to be on the top of the list of those whom people insult, persecute, and falsely say all kinds of evil against.

As Christians however, we are to see all these things as positive things. And yet, while they might be laudable attributes, we are all hesitant to be included in any of these and make it onto this list. I do not know that there are many who would like to say that they are persecuted, insulted, or lied about – even for the name of Jesus or any other reason for that matter.

To be sure, all those who openly confess their faith ***WILL*** suffer those last few things listed. As we consider that next Tuesday is nearing an election, there are many who insult, persecute, and speak all sorts of falsehood about Christians.

In turn, there are many Christians who become very meek, unwilling to speak out about their faith because you never discuss religion and politics. So, some take what they consider the meek road – in what they consider the best sense of the word – and keep their mouths shut. Their hope is that they will not suffer the insults and persecution that falls on the other Christians who speak out boldly for their faith.

Do not confuse meekness with a denial of the faith. True Christian meekness is to humbly, yet boldly speak out the Biblical truth. Humility is not to lower themselves to name calling or mud-slinging. A meek Christian will not resort to the tactics of violence and vulgarity.

As we look at what has come to be called the beatitudes, we wonder, “As a Christian, do I really need to do these things in order to be blessed by God?” Then we consider how we have failed. We have not been poor in spirit. We have only mourned occasionally, and then, trying to move on as quickly as possible, and put it all in the past. We might like to be meek, but try as we might, our pride gets in the way. We hunger and thirst after righteousness on Sunday, but do not have time to do it the rest of the week. We can be merciful to others – but only as soon as they are nice to me – only then will we make peace. After all, can you ever really return to innocence once it is lost? And that purity of heart is gone for good.

I want you to listen very closely here, Christ is not describing you in our text.

Nor is He giving to you a list of requirements to fulfill in order for you to be blessed, as if somehow when you achieve them – then and only then will God bless you. He knows you have not, nor will you succeed in that endeavor.

Are you still listening? Christ is describing Himself. He became poor in spirit, humbling Himself - Almighty God taking on human flesh. There indeed is poverty of Spirit which no man can realize. Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords, heaven is His eternal kingdom.

Enfleshed, our Creator Jesus, mourned greatly over His creation. We see His tears in the shortest verse of the Bible, “Jesus wept.” He mourned over those whom He loved, and who rejected Him and spurned His Word. He mourns over those who are lost. At the same time, Christ takes comfort in the multitudes who trust Him for salvation and join Him in His eternal Kingdom.

Christ your King rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, lowly and riding on a donkey. Seated on a colt, the foal of a donkey, He is meekness personified! Which earthly king would humble Himself to allow Himself to be led to his own death – much less, led to His own death in such a manner? None would! Yet your God humbled Himself to be born of a virgin and suffer death for your sins and mine. Earth is His inheritance, given Him by His loving Father, and He reigns victorious over sin and death by meekly taking into His flesh your sins and mine.

Christ’s hunger and thirst for your righteousness which moved Him to do all that He did. Earlier, Jesus responded to Satan’s temptation to turn stones to bread by stating, “Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.” (Mt. 4:4) Before that He had come to John to be baptized, John resisted Jesus’ request, feeling unworthy, but Jesus persisted, “Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” (Mt. 3:15)

Jesus’ greatest desire was for righteousness. His hunger and thirst for your righteousness was sated upon the cross. His righteousness, given to make the many righteous.

What wondrous mercy indeed! Was there any, ever, as merciful as Christ? Many were those who cried out, “Lord, have mercy,” the blind, lame, lepers, and many others. His mercy extended to them by healing their physical limitations. Christ even begged His Father’s mercy upon those who beat Him, whipped Him, and nailed Him to the cross. The Father’s mercy was bestowed upon Jesus when three days later He rose from the dead.

While many give the outward appearance of being holy, Christ commented that out of the heart proceeds all evil. Even the Pharisees, outwardly appearing to be most holy, stood condemned before God who can examine even the heart. The heart set upon God’s will in all things is the one which is pure. In the Garden of Gethsemane, that pure heart is exhibited in Christ’s prayer, “not my will, but thine be done.” He ascends again to the Father forty days after He rises from the dead, returning to the glory which He had before humbling Himself.

It is this Humble One who brings true peace. What is true peace? It is not what most people think. It is peace with God, for that is eternal peace! Man’s sin brought about God’s wrath. Christ was making peace, when He was reconciling the whole world to God upon the cross, appeasing the wrath of God against sinners with His own flesh. Only the Son of God was able to bring peace to those who destroy it with their own willful disobedience.

Has anyone ever suffered persecution for the sake of righteousness? From the time of His birth, when He fled to Egypt to escape Herod’s hatred, Christ endured persecution. Ultimately, Jesus suffered death at the hands of those who persecuted Him, solely for sake of righteousness. His righteousness was a blemish upon the perceived self-righteousness of the church leaders of that day. He suffered that He might give His righteousness to the unrighteous, so that they might enjoy His kingdom of heaven.

What then does this have to do with you? The very last beatitude Christ makes the connection between you and Him. The eight previous beatitudes described Christ, but now Christ connects you to Himself, and thus to the first eight. This is so, not because of what you have done or will do, but because of what He has done and still does for you, because by faith, you are ***in Him – in Christ***.

You are blessed when people insult you, persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil about you because you are in Christ. You are not blessed ***because*** you endure all these, as if you earn these blessings. These things you will suffer are your blessings, they are evidence that the reward of heaven is already yours.

Today we celebrate All Saints’ Sunday. Yes, we remember those who endured to the end in faith, now eternally sainted. They are those who have passed away and gone before us into heaven. But Christ in our text proclaims that you are already sainted, you are already holy. Baptized into His name most holy, all that is Christ’s is yours – you are His saints, His *holy ones.* Today, Christ speaks to you, His disciples. He speaks to you glorious words of promise. Today Christ proclaims to you all that is yours, for you are in Christ.

Dear friends in Christ, Blessed are you! Amen.