

## **“Blessedness” (Matthew 5:1-12)**

For Your Life in Christ the Week of the Celebration of All Saints’ Day  
(November 1<sup>st</sup>) and the Commemoration of the Faithful Departed  
(November 2<sup>nd</sup>)

November 6<sup>th</sup>, 2011

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### **Introduction: What Makes a Saint?**

- A. First of all, a saint is a living, breathing, walking believer in the Lord Jesus Christ! Notice what St. Paul writes at Ephesians 1:1:

**Ephesians 1:1: “To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus.”**

- B. Secondly, since saints continue to live after they die, saints are also in heaven as well as having been on earth. The key is that a saint is “in Christ” whether in heaven or on earth.
- C. Furthermore, a saint is literally a “holy one.”
1. But what makes a saint holy?
  2. Answer: GOD DOES (and nothing else)!
  3. How? By grace through faith on account of Jesus Christ!
  4. We are holy through faith in Him! Another way of expressing our condition of holiness is “sanctification” (think of the liturgical “Sanctus” in which we sing, “holy, holy, holy”)...anyway, notice that Scripture teaches that **Christ is our sanctification. He is our holiness!**

**1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 1:30: “[God] is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom and our righteousness and sanctification and redemption.”**

5. Last Sunday we celebrated the Reformation and focused on the truth of the Word, the **HOLY** Scriptures, but today we now consider **those who receive this holy Word, they are the HOLY saints!** Again, see this important duality of the faith:
- a. HOLY WORD: The Word of God which leads to Christ.
  - b. HOLY ONES: The people of God with faith in Christ.
- D. Summary: We are holy saints through faith in Jesus Christ.**

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### **Part I: By Nature, We Reject This Truth:**

- A. This truth is rejected because we cling to the idea that we must make ourselves holy, but when we look within ourselves we quickly come to the conclusion that we can’t be holy.
- B. For example, take a look at St. Matthew 19:16-22:  
And behold, a man came up to [Jesus], saying, “Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?” <sup>17</sup>And he said to him, “Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments.” <sup>18</sup>He said to him, “Which ones?” And Jesus said, “You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, <sup>19</sup>Honor you father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” <sup>20</sup>The young man said to him, “All these I have kept. What do I still lack?” <sup>21</sup>Jesus said to him, “If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” <sup>22</sup>When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.”
- C. Why did this rich young man go away sad? The answer is because he believed that he had to make himself holy. Jesus was leading him to realize that not only did he think too much of himself (“All these I have kept”), but that it is impossible to make oneself perfect and holy (Jesus knew what this man was incapable of giving up). When the rich young man realized his limitation, it made him sad.
- D. This is how many people live toward God: **in sadness**. Why? Because we wrongly believe by the insistence of our sinful nature that God is waiting for us to make ourselves holy.
- E. A misguided view of the saints only makes the situation worse. If we put the saints in heaven on a pedestal then we will only continue to reject what truly makes us holy: simply faith in Jesus!

### **Part II: But Shouldn’t We Remember the Saints in Heaven?**

- A. Absolutely!
- B. We are to give thanksgiving to God for His mercy to them and their example of faith in Christ!

- C. We are also to imitate their lives in terms of the faith and life that God by His grace produced in them.
- D. We should never, however, pray to the saints in heaven since we have only one mediator between us and God.

**1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 2:5: "For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."**

- E. By keeping our faith on the one mediator Jesus Christ we will avoid the trap of trying to make ourselves holy.
- F. **It is crucial therefore to understand what makes you a saint through faith in Christ...how does God create this status?**

### **Part III: The gift of faith and holiness comes by being BLESSED!**

- A. One of my fondest childhood memories is my mom tucking me in to bed and blessing me.
- B. But what if God is doing the blessing? And He does!
- C. Blessedness defined: *"blessedness refers to the condition or state of an individual who has been favorably accepted by God and has received his divine approval."* (Scaer, *The Sermon On The Mount*, 76)
- D. For example, consider the words of Jesus to St. Peter:

**St. Matthew 16:17: "And Jesus answered him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.'"**

- E. In the most simple terms = being blessed is to be given a gift from God!
- F. This is how saints are made: they are blessed by God; they are GIVEN God's approving work and made to become saints! When you were baptized, God *joined you to the life of Jesus Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit!* God blessed you and you became a saint! You continue to live in this status through faith!
- G. But are there any other indicators of this life? What does such a life look like? The answer is in the Beatitudes recorded in our Gospel today. ***They are not commands or laws, but descriptions of the Lord's life given to His people; given to***

***you! These are the blessedness gifts given to saints and they show us what a saint's life is like not because the saint produces these qualities, but because this is what God gives to those who have faith in Christ!***

1. You are poor in spirit (you make no claim of holiness in and of yourself). You confess that by yourself you are only a beggar like the tax collector in Luke 18 who said, ***"God, be merciful to me, a sinner!"***
2. You mourn on account of sin that you see in yourself and in the world, this makes you desire the only Savior from sin.
3. You are meek in that this unpretentious humility knows that God is your only real answer and salvation so you trust in Him and rest in Him; you don't have to exert yourself because Christ is your strength. He exerts Himself for you.
4. You hunger and thirst for righteousness. You depend on and desire the Lord the righteous one. You hunger and thirst for Jesus since you have no righteousness of your own.
5. You are merciful. You express to others what God has expressed to you. Because Jesus loves you, you love.
6. You are pure in heart in that you confess that Jesus alone is your purity and that it is only through Him you know God.
7. You are a peacemaker in that since you have been reconciled to God in Christ, you share His peace.
8. & 9. You face persecution, rejection, and hardship since you hold to Christ and His Word which is also rejected.

***Again, these are not commands that you do; they are blessed conditions that God has given to you; they describe the life of a saint. We know these to the extent that we abide in Christ.***

### **Conclusion: Remember the saints and that you are one too!**

- A. So we remember saints as we give all glory to Jesus Christ!
- B. We emulate them only insofar as they trusted in the Lord.
- C. We remain His blessed people by remaining in Christ and receiving His blessed gifts: His Word and Sacraments. These keep us in Christ and in the blessedness of God.