

In Christianity, things aren't always as they appear. The grandma in the pew may not seem like much, but she is well known in the heavenly realms as her consistent and persistent prayers rise like incense before God. The rich and famous televangelist may seem like he has God's favor, but he peddles lies and false teaching. Jesus' death may have seemed like the end, but it was a climax in His ministry as the world held its collective breath for the three days before His resurrection.

In Christianity, this contrast from appearance vs. reality is clearly experienced on a festival like All Saints' Day. Today, we all consider loved ones who have died in the faith, and many in the world around us would say they're gone. Others would have a vague notion of us being reunited with them, but for them, it's nothing more than a wish. Today, we rest in the promise of the resurrection, and we exult to know that the faithful departed rest in the presence of Christ.

Our text for today is the Beatitudes from Matthew 5. As we go through each of these nine blessings, we see there is a difference between appearance vs. reality. For each of these blessings, we will consider how Jesus fulfills the beatitude, how that applies to us today, and moreover, how it applies to our loved ones who are with Jesus. **BECAUSE JESUS EMBODIES THE BEATITUDES, WE TOO ARE BLESSED.**

First, I. In the beatitudes, Jesus fills the empty. Jesus said, **“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”** To be poor in spirit is to rely totally and fully on God for all your needs. Those who are poor in spirit don't assume they have anything to claim before God or any religiosity of their own.

It may seem counterintuitive, but in that sense, we could say that Jesus was poor in spirit. Although Jesus was in the form of God, He didn't count equality with God a thing to be grasped but made Himself nothing. Although Jesus is God, He drew His strength from the Father and the Holy Spirit to carry on His ministry. He lived His life completely relying on His Heavenly Father and empowered by the Holy Spirit. That's why He often made time to pray. Who else does the Kingdom of Heaven belong to except Jesus Christ, the King?

As we come here today weighed down by the stresses and pressures of this world, Jesus invites us to be spiritually poor. He invites us to rely completely on Him and not claim anything of our own. Those impossible things in your life, entrust to the Lord who created the heavens and the earth and has your situation under control.

We look to the Christians who have gone before us, and as they trusted Jesus throughout their lives, they too were spiritually poor as Jesus filled them up and cared for them. Now we rejoice because theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven as they have received the crown of glory and dwell in peace before Jesus.

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.” Jesus mourned at times throughout His earthly ministry. He lamented the death of His friend Lazarus. He lamented over the city of Jerusalem who would ultimately reject Him. He mourns death, suffering, and humanity’s sinful, destructive ways.

Many come to Church today with heavy hearts as we mourn the loss of loved ones. Maybe it’s someone who died this year, maybe it’s someone who died decades ago. Our reading from Revelation assures us that God will wipe away every tear from your eyes. Jesus promises that He will comfort us who mourn.

This comforting Jesus brings is not a well written sympathy card or just a pat on the back, it is delivered as He has a solution to death in His resurrection. Throughout His earthly ministry, He raised Lazarus from the dead as well as others. He is comforting the saints who have gone before us with His presence even as He assures us He will come again to restore us in body *and* soul.

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” Nobody was humbler than Jesus. He is God Himself in human flesh, yet He was an unassuming figure. Nonetheless, He Himself is the King of the universe. He reigns over the earth even now as He works behind the scenes to keep things going.

Because Jesus’ humility is counted to you, so too the Father is calling you to serve faithfully even if nobody notices. Ministry is done not as we do things worthy of the ten o’clock news, but as we consistently do small things that add up to big results.

As we consider the Christians who have gone before us, many may be forgotten, and their lives were otherwise unremarkable, but Jesus noticed. Jesus cares for all His redeemed. They and we have the promise that when Christ comes again, we will inherit a restored creation that is without sin. That is our Christian hope.

““Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.” Even though Jesus is perfect, nonetheless He hungered and thirsted for righteousness as He always sought to do the right thing. The Father satisfied Him as He was glorified and ascended to heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father.

We struggle against sin and it will be a lifelong struggle, yet we who hunger and thirst for righteousness and holiness will be satisfied even today as we receive forgiveness from the pastor as the spokesperson for God, and we are satisfied as we receive Christ’s righteousness in Jesus’ body and blood delivered to us in communion. However, we await that day when we join those saints who have been perfected and who are sheltered in Christ’s very presence.

II. In the beatitudes, Jesus makes sinners holy. The next three beatitudes focus further on qualities of Christ and how He imputes these qualities to us by our faith in Him. **“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.”** Jesus

showed mercy to many in His earthly ministry as He healed the sick, showed kindness to enemies, and ultimately as He forgave sinners through His death on the cross.

Even on days when you are impatient and unmerciful, Jesus shows you mercy by forgiving you. The Holy Spirit is working in you through His Word and the Sacrament to make you more merciful. We rejoice that those loved ones who died in the faith have been shown mercy that despite their earthly sufferings, God has shown them mercy and brought them into His nearer presence.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” Jesus had the purest heart of any human. In fact, He is sinless. He sees God even as He stands in the Father’s presence and was guided by Him throughout His time here on Earth. Even though we may not be pure in heart, Jesus’ purity becomes ours. We, like the saints before us, have the promise that we shall see God. Lord willing, the last set of eyes you will see are those of your loved ones before you die, but when you arise from death, the first set of eyes you will see are those of Jesus pulling you out of your grave.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.” The greatest peacemaker is Jesus Christ whose sacrificial death made peace between us and the Father. He is the Son of God.

By extension, we are called sons and daughters of God through our association with *that* Son of God. **“for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.”** Because the Son of God made peace with the Father for our sake, we can make peace with others. We rejoice in those Christians who have been laid to rest and have received their inheritances as sons and daughters of God.

Finally, **III. In the beatitudes, Jesus walks with us from here to there.** The last two beatitudes deal with persecution. **“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”**

As we consider everything that Jesus has suffered for our sake, and as we consider the unspeakable glories that our brothers and sisters in Christ experience now who endured persecution and suffering for the faith throughout their lives for their own reasons and in their own ways.

There are a lot of sorrows in this life. There will be persecution, but since you are in Christ, you are blessed. Never forget this even when things aren’t as they appear. Your tears will be wiped away. You will be reunited with the faithful departed. You are blessed in Jesus. Amen!