

Communion Meditations
 All Saints - 2 November 2009
 Matthew 5:1-12
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Matthew 5:1-12

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. "Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. "Blessed are you when people 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 in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

"Blessings are ..."

Blessings are an infusion of something with holiness, divine will, or one's hopes.¹ Earlier in our tradition, only a bishop, priest or deacon may bless, but today, anyone may informally bless another. When you bless another, you give them a sprinkle of God. You give them a taste of all that is good about worship. You bestow upon them the sweet smell of the Kingdom, which God is already deploying.

We walk the path of Christian discipleship searching for God's will in our midst. Which decision should we make? What would God say? Where would God lead? Sometimes in the prayerful revelation for our own path-making, God's will is made known through us to others. Sharing the revelation of the Divine will with those open to receive it – is a blessing.

My best hope for you this moment is that you will taste and see the glory of the Lord in the eating of this bread and in the sharing of this wine. May it be glory beyond anything that I may be able to manufacture, or we may be able to stage. My blessing for you is that the sharing of this common loaf and this common cup might make you one with Christ, one with His body, given life by the breath of His Spirit.

¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blessing>

Blessings require the participation of God. Without God, they become nothing more than an emotional, heart-felt wish. Blessings are extending the connection we have with God, to stretch it, and make it a place of hospitality to include another. When shared with one other, and with God, we find ourselves in the land of blessings. Look to your left and to your right. These are the people of God's blessing. Look beyond the doors of this church. These are the people God seeks to bless. Look to those most in need; be the hands, be the heart, be the Body of Christ. Extend God's presence and become God's blessing to everyone you meet.

Amen.

"Blessed are ..."

Who are blessed?

When we look to Jesus, we see that he extended the circle of grace to those who lived at the margins of society: the poor, the diseased, women and children, the unclean. The well had no need of a blessing; they already received their blessing from the Temple Priest:

May the LORD bless you, and keep you;
 May the LORD make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you;
 May the LORD turn his countenance to you and grant you peace.²

Jesus blesses the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Jesus blesses those who more, that they might find comfort. Jesus blesses the meek, and deeds the earth over to them. Jesus blesses the hungry and thirsty – both for food and for righteousness, that they might be fed.

Jesus blesses the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, and the persecuted for His sake ... gosh, it almost makes you want to become more merciful, pure in heart, and a peacemaker. It almost makes me brave enough take a more public stand for Christ and his Kingdom, knowing that our reward is great in heaven!

The blessed can be you. That is the point of eating this bread and drinking of this wine. The blessing can be you, if only you allow it to be. Amen.

"Be the Blessing"

We assume that blessing means an absence of suffering. This just isn't true. It is hard to feel blessed when the world is falling apart all around us, when pain is everywhere we turn, when the misery of our past won't let go it's suffocating grip.

² The Priestly Blessing, from Numbers 6:24-26

The rich can be a blessing, simply by making a major gift, or, the smart can be a blessing, simply by finding the cure to cancer – or some other major accomplishment. But how can I be the blessing? I'm not Tom Galisano and I don't have a Ph.D. behind my name.

I'm here to tell you that some of the richest blessings come from those who bear the heaviest burdens. The richest of all comes through Jesus Christ, who suffered and died on a cross, for your sake and for mine.

I do not underestimate or minimise the intensity of anyone's burden. But I believe Jesus, by his crucifixion, allows us to see the pain and struggles of life as an opportunity, not as punishment. It is an opportunity to listen and see the movement and presence of God in our life, and to pass it on as a blessing to the lives of others.

When we share the pain, the individual burden is lessened, and all the pathways for life's journey begin to lead towards God. The crucifixion works through our personal suffering to infuse a blessing into the life of another when we allow ourselves to be the blessing.

Be the blessing that God has planted you to become. Amen.

"Blessings Will Never Cease"

Here lies the beloved departed, ashes to ashes and dust to dust. We are ready to bury the body and we hope, beyond all hopes, that we can pick up the pieces and move on in our life. Beneath Memorial Day flowers lie our buried blessings.

It is fitting that yesterday was All Saints Day, and we celebrate their death and resurrection during this service today.

The fact that we are here today is a loud and in-your-face proclamation that just because a person dies, their blessings do not die with them. We have the first-hand experience of God's blessing through them at some point in their lifetime. They, in turn, had the first-hand experience of God's blessing through a disciple of the previous generation at some point in their lifetime. And so it goes.

Blessings can no more die than Jesus could stay trapped in his tomb!

That infusion of holiness transcends the ages. Blessings are eternal, for they continue to be passed along through the lives of the faithful to each succeeding generation. God's grace and love continues to be the blessing.

As long as we are faithful stewards of God's blessings in our lifetime, one day, we too will be celebrated as a Saint of the Church of Jesus Christ. That blessing will never end, and we, too, will benefit from eternal life with our God.

Take this bread, drink this cup. It is the same blessing of our ancestors. We are the Body of Christ today. And tomorrow, the blessing will continue when you are crowned a Saint and receive your eternal reward.

Amen.