**Blessed is the Example of Christ**

Based on [Matthew 5:1-12](http://biblia.com/books/esv/Mt5.1-12)

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All Saints’ Day (Observed)

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The Sermon on the Mount begins with nine beatitudes or “blessings” that Jesus preaches to his disciples. A Beatitude is a blessing. **Jesus tells his disciples, (you are His disciples), He tells His disciples what someone who is righteous before God *looks like* in this world.**

That’s what it means to be blessed—to look righteous to God. It doesn’t mean to be endowed with things that make you “fit in” and accepted here. To be blessed means nothing else than that you are righteous, justified, “as you should be” in God’s sight.

These nine beatitudes first describe Jesus, the One who was perfectly blessed by God because He was and is God. And because when He came down from heaven to earth, He did everything right and perfect. **He was poor in spirit; meaning he emptied himself of all claims to deserve God’s favour**. And nevertheless the kingdom of heaven was given to Him. He mourned over the apostasy of His people, “**O Jerusalem, Jerusalem**”, and yet He was comforted when God raised Him from the dead.

In meekness, He was submissive to the will of God. He was even compliant saying as He faced the cross, “**Take this cup from me, but not my will but Thy will be done.**” And afterward He inherited all authority in heaven and on earth. In a world of unrighteousness, He hungered and thirsted for righteousness saying: “**How long must I be with you faithless and perverse generation?**” And after winning the atonement of the world by his blood, He was satisfied.

Jesus was blessed because He was merciful. He was pure in heart, because he spoke openly and plainly the truth. He was a peacemaker, because His blood reconciled God with His enemies. He was the perfect example of righteousness. And on the night He was betrayed, He washed His disciples feet as a “poor in spirit, mournful, meek, and justice-starved man.” And said to His disciples: “**I have given you an *example*, that you also should do just as I have done to you. Truly, truly I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor a messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, *blessed* are you if you do them**” (John 13: 15-17).

Jesus says you are blessed who *follow His example*. And He perfectly sets before you that example in the first teaching He ever gives in the Holy Scriptures--the nine beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount.

First He says, “**Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God.**” The poor in spirit are those who recognize their poverty, their bankruptcy, their “empty pockets” before the almighty God. A famous hymn of Jesus Christ is recited by St. Paul in Philippians 2 (:6-8): “**Though He (The Son of God) was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking on the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.**”

Jesus was not bankrupt before God. You are; but He wasn’t. And yet He presented Himself as bankrupt. He “emptied Himself”. **He presented Himself before God with no airs…but simply as He was.** Only *He* was righteous. And on that account God gave Him all authority and the kingdom of heaven.

Just as Jesus did, you too are called to present yourself before God with no airs. But unlike Jesus you are bankrupt. **You have nothing to offer God except your poverty, your need, your helplessness, your sin.** But you need not fear, because Jesus Christ has filled your coffers—your faith—so that when you present yourself to God as He did, you will walk away as He did—justified.

This is the Gospel—the “Good News of the salvation we have in Jesus Christ. **Jesus lived the perfect life yet did not claim a “right” to anything before God or the world as evil and unjust as it is.** And yet God searched Jesus heart and deeds, saw His righteousness, and declared Him Lord of all.

So too, you can approach God as Jesus did—empty pockets, no airs. And though you are a sinner, Jesus’ perfect obedience is imputed, *given* to you by faith. And you shall leave His intimidating and all-knowing presence *Justified*. What’s more, He makes you judges yourselves. “Jesus said to His disciples, “**Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel**” (Matt. 19:28). Authority will be given to you who are poor in spirit; not because you seek it, but because you stand before God penniless; and He fills you with Christ’s righteousness; and then gives to *you* heaven itself.

Second, Jesus says, “**Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.**” Those who mourn are those who have lost someone or something precious to them. Jesus lost you—His beloved people—when Adam ate the forbidden fruit. Since then His beloved people--all of mankind--have been corrupted in their flesh by sin, death, and sympathy for the devil. God mourned the day He sent us out of Eden, the paradise He made for us. **Jesus was there.** He is the Word of God and He was the One who had to bear the unbearable news that we were no longer fit to dwell with Him in paradise.

But before He even pronounced to our first parents this awful and just verdict, He promised that they would not be cast out forever. He comforted them with the news that a messiah would be sent in human flesh to crush Satan, and restore them to paradise (Gen 3:15). **He mourned the loss of His creation; but God established His comfort with a promise, that He would win back what was lost.** He, Jesus, the founder and perfecter of *your* faith, would *for joy* endure the cross, scorning the shame, and win the victory as Lord of all (Heb 12:2).

So too we mourn the loss of the faithful departed. **All Saints’ Day is about that. But today we set the dead before us in *joy*, because these are the ones who have come out of the great tribulation, out of this “veil of tears.”** They are ones who have *won the race* and *kept the faith* and inherited the crown of eternal comfort that is promised also you who believe.

Next Jesus says, “**Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth**.” This turns on its head every humanly devised wisdom or philosophy or religion. **The world says that the meek will be trampled upon; the humble will be ignored and denied their rights.** Those who refuse to stick up for themselves--who do not have the force of personality to intimidate the bullies and the bosses of the world—they will be least in it.

And the world is absolutely correct. Unless you’re a bully, you will be bullied. Unless you are assertive you will be denied. **Unless you pad your resume, you will not be hired.**  If you are poor in spirit, you will be poor in the world. But if that is you, Jesus says, “yours is the kingdom of heaven.”

But of course, Jesus was arrested and led to trial. And just as a lamb is silent before His shearers Jesus opened not His mouth. The world tried Him, but He did not recognize the world’s authority; even though they had the power to crucify Him and did so.

John writes in the epistle for today, “**The reason why the world does not know us is that they did not know Christ**.” Sons of peace, do you want to be known by the world, appreciated, renown?…of course not. Because then you wouldn’t be like Christ your Lord. Who else is there to imitate? “**Lord to whom shall we go**? (John 6:68). The powerful? The influential? Those who *“get results”* by the sheer force of their will? This world belongs to them--and they can have it! Yours is the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus says, “**Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied**.” The reason Jesus was crucified was because He wasn’t satisfied with the food of the world. The world fed Him excuses and lies and deception. **The Pharisees and the scribes fed Him with lukewarm teachings about washing his hands and ignoring cries for help on the Sabbath.** He spit them out of His mouth; and would rather starve than sup on the empty calories set at *man’s* table. But the Lord’s Supper gives man to eat *righteousness*--the nourishment that sanctifies and makes holy men who hunger for justice.

The Son of God never hungered for Justice, until He came to earth in human flesh. Then He could not find it. On earth He could not find justice. **He looked among His chosen people and rather than Justice, they were eating and drinking judgment upon themselves**. For that’s what the hired hands and false shepherds of Israel were dishing up for them. And so He overturned the moneychangers’ tables. He whipped them out of His Father’s house. Because His precious and faithful lambs were hungry, and were being fed the poison of mammon.

Jesus found no great faith in Israel, because His people were being fattened for the slaughter by wolves and hired hands. **It was the gentile, the *centurion*, the *Caananite* *woman*, the *Samaritan* *leper* who hungered, but were not fed the roughage of imitation godliness.**  Instead they knew the real thing when they saw it in Jesus, and begged Him for *His* righteousness by faith. And He ***satisfied*** them, beyond measure.

If you have no hunger or thirst for righteousness, you have no business being here in this church today. This fellowship of fifty or five Christians is for those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. **If you are here because you think God hungers for your sacrifice--for what you have to offer Him and His church--go home.** He’ll deal with you later.

*//But* if you are here because you are suffering from the world’s unrighteousness and your own…hear the Word of the Lord. You will be satisfied. Your God became a human being so that He could sacrifice His body and shed His blood for you. And He gives it to you today at this altar. He said and says, “**This is my body shed for you. This is my blood poured out for you for the forgiveness of your sins. You who hunger and thirst for righteousness come! Empty your pockets and come and I will feed you your righteousness.**”