**God Without Thunder**

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

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All Saints’ Day

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November 1 is All Saints Day. In the beatitudes, Jesus gives us nine descriptions of saints on earth. They are those who are *poor in spirit*, who *mourn*, the meek, those who *hunger and thirst for righteousness*, those who are *merciful*, the *pure in heart*, the *peacemakers*, those who are *persecuted for righteousness sake*, the ones who are *slandered for christ*. In short, a saint is one who lives by faith in a world of sin, and these are descriptions of what that looks like.

Attached to the nine descriptions are promises. Saints are promised a future glory and a future peace and a future heaven. Jesus says of the saints, they have a *claim to the kingdom of heaven*, they will be *comforted*, the ones who *will inherit the earth*, those who *will be satisfied*, those who shall *receive mercy*, those who shall *see God and be called sons of God*, those whose *reward is great in heaven*.

These promises aren’t meant for everybody. The promise of heaven is only for the saints, those who are baptized and believed. And the dead saints, the faithful departed have attained all of these promises. All except one. They have inherited heaven but haven’t yet inherited the earth. That is the happy day that the Lord Jesus will return, raise all the dead and bring his glorious kingdom to earth.

Living saints live in the kingdom of God now by grace, but we are strangers in a strange land. This doesn’t mean we can’t be happy here. In fact, one way to translate “Blessed” is “Happy”. But it does mean that our happiness does not come from here. It is a state of mind where one is readily aware of the truth, not just of things visible, but also things invisible and to come.

For the saint, the promise of heaven is essential to his life on earth.

We deserve hell, but Jesus Christ paid for our sin and promises us heaven. An undeserved heaven is one of the invisible things that the saint is ever mindful of. And it makes him meek; it makes him poor, and it makes him hated and persecuted in the world. Because the world and it’s ways have no control over the person whose sights are set to a brighter horizon than it offers.

There is a teaching that has found its way into the church that ignores or else denies the reality of hell, a place of eternal torment that awaits those who die without faith. Such a place does not seem to comport, they think with the unconditional love of God. And since God’s love is a primary teaching, it means the teaching of hell has to go.

But if they were serious about what they say, they would take it to its logical conclusion.

If life in heaven is truly better than life on earth.

And if everyone goes to heaven when they die, no one to hell

Why not, in christian love, hasten the death of everyone you see, including yourself?

“But God commands us not to kill.” That’s no answer for them. They decided that God's love is a primary teaching that all other teachings must change to align with love. And “love” is to help others end the suffering and inadequacy of this life. So why not send people to heaven as quickly as possible? Surely that’s what their loving God is calling them to do. And even if God doesn’t want the killing, it makes no difference, because killers go to heaven anyway.

Remember...in this view God’s love, that means a love that is reasonable, is primary. It touches all other teachings and rules over them. Love means no hell. That’s why suicide rates have skyrocketed in the last several decades. That’s why physician assisted suicides “mercy killings” are now legal and praised. Because in death everyone goes to heaven...or at least...no one goes to hell. So when this life fails to make us happy...time to cash in our chips.

The false teaching that everyone is going to heaven when they die is called universalism. But the universalist cannot really believe his premises, or else he would bid everyone “drink the kool-aid.” Either (1) he doesn’t fully believe heaven is better than earth…(which means he’s not a saint but a lover of this world). Or (2) he doesn’t actually believe everyone goes to heaven when they die.

He avoids the teaching of hell to make God appear more loving, more reasonable. He pretends everyone goes to heaven to improve upon the gospel of scripture. He preaches universalism...not because it’s true, but because it makes him and his hearers feel better, at least for the moment. He eats the forbidden fruit, tells a lie in the name of love, because the lie is pleasing to the eyes, desirable to consume, and able to make him wise. But he’s a fool, and there’s always a price for sacrificing truth for practical ends. He wants a God of sunshine but not a God of thunder, so it takes a lie to remake God in his own image.

He want a God without thunder, and here’s what that means...

1. God is not mysterious, he’s reasonable.
2. God wants you to find your happiness on earth. The promise of heaven is only to comfort the suffering and dying.
3. God’s love is incompatible with hell. Therefore, everyone is going to heaven, regardless of what they believe or do on earth.

But our God is not so tame. He’s good, but he has thunder. He is the same God that frightened the people on Sinai, and made them fear punishment. Jesus Christ came and died for the sin of the world, so that all who would believe on him would have forgiveness and eternal life in heaven. He alone appeased God’s wrath and thunder. But God did not change. He is still a God of wrath and thunder, of mysteries awful and wonderful. He still allows suffering and sin in this world, he allows the saints to be persecuted and poor, and he still threatens hell for those who do not seek sanctuary in his son.

Those who do seek their reward in heaven, they are the saints, meek, poor, slandered, merciful and peacemakers. You, through your baptism and faith in Christ, are a saint. And though you don’t seek death or pray for it, when your time does come, on your deathbed, you have reason to be happy. Like the child trying to fall asleep Christmas eve, because he knows gifts await him in the morning when he wakes. We trust that God will take us when he’s ready, and that’s not a threat. It’s a promise. This life has many great blessings...more than we deserve...and to live here and now is Christ’s will. But we need not fear death when God decides to take us, for the joys of heaven will bring satisfaction, comfort, and eternal peace.