**The Struggle of the Saints on Earth**

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

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All Saints’ Day (Observed)

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The nine beatitudes that kick off Jesus’ excellent sermon on the mount are quite famous. When our Lord makes lists, it helps us remember. Twelve disciples, Ten commandments, nine beatitudes. And as we see today in our first lesson, the book of Revelation is especially keen on numbers and numbering, not only the total of the twelve tribes who are sealed, but elsewhere, seven scrolls and plagues and so on.

Numbers are memory aids when paired with ideas and concepts. They also help sort and classify. What, then, is the common theme, the common denominator of these nine beatitudes, such that Jesus finds reason to list them together here? When we consider them all together, the common factor is hope. Hope is being happy because of a promise that is sure to come. Hope works on a principle of delayed gratification, that you can tolerate the present because of what is coming in the future. Hope also moves the soul to contentment. “It is well with my soul”. There is a tension between our present struggles and the glory that is to be revealed. And attending to this struggle, without losing hope on the one hand or quenching the spirit on the other, is the mark of the christian on earth. It is the purpose of the church, and why we are not supposed to neglect coming together. Because we are all in this struggle, and we need to build one another up in the word, because we live in hope, and hope is not seen it is heard.

With the nine beatitudes, (“blessings” for those who might not be tracking), Jesus is making nine arguments, putting forth nine assertions that rest on his authority. These points all rest on hope, and they have to be asserted as promises from heaven, because they will not be found on earth.

Heaven and earth are at war over who gets to define “the blessed life” or “the happy life”. The world says the happy life is the life where you find a balance in your life. When you minimize tensions and take charge of those things that seem to be getting in the way of your personal goals. For the earthly minded, life is about becoming comfortable in your environment. Many people go to therapists, psychiatrists and counselors to help them manage how to do this. How can I set up boundaries in my life? How can I find the courage and clarity say no to others, rather than giving in for fear of reprisal and judgment. How can I take charge of of my life?

There’s a famous prayer, though quite new in the history of creation. It’s called the serinity prayer.

“God grant me the serenity

To accept the things I cannot change;

Courage to change the things I can;

And wisdom to know the difference.”

I’m sure you’ve heard that prayer before. It’s not a bad prayer, but I want you to notice something. What is prayed for is the whole purpose of cognitive therapy, which in itself can be achieved--it is though--without God’s help, without God’s Word, and without reference to a saviour.

All this to say that the world seeks peace, contentment, and the beautiful life. And there is a wisdom there in realizes that it is found in recognizing there are some things you haven’t the power to change. And contentment, which is peace, is having the ability to accept those things without fear.

All this to answer the question, “What are the beatitudes doing?” They are Jesus setting the record straight for those who can believe things not seen. The world looks at outward appearances, but God sees the heart. And from the Mount he says with absolute authority that those people who lack confidence in themselves, they are the ones who are truly blessed and truly have reason to be happy. Because God has prepared all things for them. They need not fear what the world can do to them, because God is ordering all things to be united in his son, who will conquer and obtain the keys to death and hades. And he will lead his blessed dead into the resurrection of the just. They cannot change their sinful condition, but he can. And those who wait upon their captain will not be put to shame.

This blessed life isn’t those who figure out how to minimize the struggle against sin…you can do that by giving in to it. But Jesus says you who fight the good fight are blessed. You don’t give into sin to avoid the struggle, but you struggle against sin...not because you will overcome it, but because He has. And he will give you the victory as you endure to the end and do not give up the struggle. This makes Christians the ones who are truly the meek, the poor in spirit, the mourners and those starving of righteousness.

It is the ultimate irony that the helpless are the ones who are truly blessed. Now this has a spiritual meaning. There are plenty of helpless and pitiable people who have made shipwreck of their lives that aren’t blessed. But that’s because they don’t know Christ, and the power of his redemption, and the contentment of his peace. And there are also those whose lives are successful according to the worlds standards, but somehow christ has taken their camel through the eye of a needle. They are regarded in the world and yet, like St. Paul preaches “I count it all rubbish that I may gain Christ and be found in him.”

As the church, we constantly attend to this struggle between God’s word and the world. There is a tension between the two, and we are called to live in the struggle with contentment. This involves accepting the one thing we cannot change...God’s Word; courageously changing the things we can, how we live our lives in response to the Word; and the wisdom to know the difference. Some think they can resolve the christian struggle here by changing the word to conform to the changing world. This is foolishness. Some think they can resolve the struggle by refusing to respond to God’s call and resigning everything to fate. We accept God’s word, and we strive to live according to his commands. This is a struggle that we--as saints on earth will live with. We will lose many shallow opportunities in this world as a result, and yet we are the ones whom Christ calls blessed.

But the saints in heaven are blessed in a different way. They are blessed without hope. We are blessed despite our struggles, they are blessed because they have attained to life without that struggle, by obtaining the promised deliverance to glory. They live now in God’s presence, with no more tears, or suffering or anything that is the result of living in a kingdom that is in constant tension with God’s righteous word. They live in that word without any opposition. We weep when they die, they now weep for us as we live, because our struggle is not over. But they have run the race. They have kept the faith. And they have received the crown of eternal life that they cast before the lamb on His throne who was slain before the foundation of the world, and who died and behold he lives and reigns to all eternity. He is the help of the helpless. To those whom the world considers cursed he calls blessed. Blessed be his Name now and forevermore. Amen.