**November 1, 2026**
**Sermon Manuscript**
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**Matthew 5:1-12 (NIV)**

1 Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up
on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples
came to him, 2 and he began to teach them.
He said:
3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
4 Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.
5 Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.
6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for
righteousness,
for they will be filled.
7 Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.
8 Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.
9 Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.
10 Blessed are those who are persecuted because
of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
11 "Blessed are you when people insult you,
persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil
against you because of me. 12 Rejoice and be glad,
because great is your reward in heaven, for in the
same way they persecuted the prophets who were
before you.

## On All Saints

Today is the feast of All Saints, when the Church has traditionally remembered the great men and women who have gone before us throughout history who have been canonized as Saints of the Church: Holy people whose lives stood out from the rest as their faith and actions furthered the kingdom of God. Saints such as St. John Chrysostom, St. Isidore (the farmer), St Anthony, and St Mother Teresa of Calcutta.

- St. John Chrysostom was a very talented theologian, preacher and defender of the faith, even standing up to the wife of the emperor. His title "Chrysostom" was bestowed on him because of his fame in preaching;, it literally means golden mouthed.
- St. Isidore was an 11th century farmer in Madrid, Spain, who was canonized a saint by his devotion to attending church daily along with his constant prayer as he worked in the fields. His entire life was spent as a farmer and day laborer, doing ordinary work. And yet, legend has it that his oxen were able to continue to plow as he prayed, and he made a fountain of water appear from dry ground.
- St. Teresa of Calcutta, known more colloquially as Mother Teresa, established a community called Missionaries of charity in Calcutta, India.

She served the poorest of the poor, both their physical and spiritual needs, always giving dignity to everyone.

- St. Anthony the Great of Egypt was a monastic who lived out in the desert. He is remembered as the father of organized Christian monasticism. He was considered such a threat to the Devil that he suffered many spiritual attacks from evil forces, in the form of various temptations, seductions, and even physical violence - all which he repelled through a vigorous prayer life.

It is a good thing that we remember people such as these. The Church has recognized their contributions to the faith, to the Church, and to the world, by calling them Saints. The hope when we hear about their lives and deeds is that we can admire their exemplary lives and strive to attain to their level of achievement or holiness. But what can often be the case is we can compare ourselves to them, causing us to feel like our faith or our lives are insufficient.

November 1st is the traditional day when the Church celebrates All Saints, and November 2nd is then the celebration of All Souls. All Souls, also called the commemoration of the faithful departed, remembers the believers that might be thought of as “ordinary.” The people who have passed on before us, such as your neighbor, or grandparent, etc. However, in many Anglican churches both All Saints and All souls have been combined into one feast day, rather than separating them out. This is done because there shouldn't be a distinction between the Canonized Saints and the title of saint that we all have claim to. And there is good reasoning behind combining these two celebrations: regularly in the New Testament, Paul calls normal Christians saints, such as right at the beginning of his second letter to the Corinthians he addresses the whole church as saints. So while the Canonized Saints of the church do have a special place, recognizing the work they have done should not overshadow the generally overlooked work of the everyday saints who have died.

In Matthew’s gospel today we hear the beginning of Jesus's Sermon on the Mount, which opens with the beatitudes. While each individual statement found in the beatitudes could be the basis of their own sermon,  I want to focus your attention primarily on the first one. In verse 3, Jesus says “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” So what does it mean to be poor in spirit? A poverty of spirit does not mean someone who doesn't have much faith, or is full of doubt, but rather it is someone who has a spiritual lack or deficiency. Just as someone who is physically poor lacks the financial resources to do as they please, someone who is poor in spirit lacks the spiritual resources they need in order to best love God and neighbor.

The Kingdom of Heaven is a reality that can be considered now and not yet. It was inaugurated by the coming of Jesus, his ministry, death, and resurrection and is continued in the church, but it also looks forward to the life eternal. It is the communal life we as the church share, a community of love that seeks to bring more people into the fold of Jesus - even as we anticipate a future life in unity with God in the next life.

So here, Jesus says that the kingdom of heaven belongs to those who are poor in spirit, and they will be blessed. He isn't saying that everyone who has some sort of spiritual deficiency automatically has the keys to the kingdom. Rather, the subject of the blessing is the one who realizes their spiritual need for God, and relies on his continuously offered help in order to live out a life of love. Now, in truth every single person in the world is poor in spirit, Christians and non-Christians alike,regardless if they are aware of it or not. But does that mean that every person is going to be blessed? No. We are all deeply dependent on God for everything. Our spiritual health is tied directly to him, as he is the source of our faith. So when Jesus is referring to the poor in spirit he is talking about the people who are aware of their spiritual poverty, and with this awareness they turn to and rely on God. There is a distinct humility in poverty, both physical poverty and spiritual poverty. When we don't have enough for our needs we are forced to lay aside our pride and ask for help. In the case of our spiritual lives, God is always willing and in fact delighted to offer that help.

So, when we think about St. Paul, for example, we would all think of him as an exemplary saint - he planted a number of churches and wrote half of the New Testament. And yet in his 1st letter to Timothy he refers to himself as the “foremost among sinners.” So St Paul was poor in spirit - he recognized his spiritual need for God and humbled himself to rely on Him… and *that* is what allowed God to work through him. And that is God’s hope for us as well, that we will live with an awareness of our spiritual need for Him and humble ourselves to His help.

So what does it mean that we who are poor in spirit will be blessed? Blessed could be interpreted to mean many things: some might say that it means greater physical wealth, or good health, or having nothing bad happen to us. But that doesn't fit the narrative of what Jesus is talking about in the beatitudes. Instead, the blessedness that Jesus is talking about here is a richness of life that comes from a journey of learning to live in reliance of God. Not necessarily prosperity, but a depth of living that can only be found in the intimate communion with our creator and savior. The humility of being poor in spirit allows for us to go to Him for all our needs, but also to go to Him with all our joys, sorrows, and everything in between - rather than trying, usually futilely, to figure things out on our own.

If we read the rest of the beatitudes, it becomes quickly clear that the virtues or postures that Jesus is extolling are not the same as what the world views as good. The world doesn't value mourning, it tells you to get over grief quickly. It doesn't like meekness, it tells you to be bold and aggressive. The world doesn't want true peacemakers, it wants people who are conflict avoidant and nice. The world doesn't want you hungering after righteousness, it wants you hungering after money, and things. Within the beatitudes the things that are called blessed usually require something of us. Our sinful nature wants us to be selfish, to serve our needs and wants above and at the expense of others. It feels a lot easier to serve the idol of self rather than God himself. Being persecuted for the sake of Jesus, being merciful, being meek, being pure in heart - these are not the easiest things to do and they can cost us. Jesus is inviting us to submit to this kingdom ideal of a person. Of course he is not asking us to suddenly be all of these things perfectly, but we can look at ourselves and ask if we are making strides to fit into these kingdom categories instead of categories the world prefers. We have the opportunity to give up the inadequate self-identities that we may have and put on the robes of righteousness that Jesus offers us.

The canonized Saints really understood this idea of submitting to the will of God. They understood what it meant to be a part of his kingdom, from the beginning to the end. For example there was a lesser known saint known as St. Germanicus. He lived in Smyrna in the 2nd century. He was arrested with a group of Christians by the Roman government and they were asked to recant their atheism and swear by Caesar, and if they didn't they would be executed. Early Christians were considered atheists because they only worshipped one God as opposed to the pantheon that the Romans worshipped. Anyway, the Roman official encouraged Germanicus to recant, because he was a youth, just a teenager. He had his whole life in front of him, so he should give up his faith and live his life. Instead of doing so he entered into the stadium filled with the wild beasts which were to be the means of execution and goaded and provoked the beasts, so that he could leave “the unrighteous world quicker.” His life ended in total submission to Jesus and his way of life, no hesitation: just utter reliance on God and his promises.

The Beatitudes are an invitation to live by a certain standard, one that looks strange to the world. Since the way of the kingdom, the narrow way, looks different than the way of the world, it would follow that the ways in which we measure or imagine what success is would differ.

The canonized Saints that we remember today did some incredible things, they helped shape the history of the church and our faith. Some performed miracles, some defended the faith, some wrote and preached, and some even surrendered their lives

for the sake of Christ. But the Saints didn't do all that they did in order to gain recognition or fame, or to be considered successful. Rather their goal was to be obedient to God's call on their lives, and God desires for this to be the goal of our lives.

It can be easy to compare ourselves to others, to either think we are better or worse than them. I personally find this can be especially true with these canonized saints, who seem to be better than me in just about every way - which to be fair the church has basically said they are amazing. Even with the ideas of the beatitudes we can be tempted to compare ourselves with each other. Have we suffered more persecution for the sake of Jesus, are we more merciful than our neighbor, have we more reason to mourn, etc. But all this is the opposite of the core of the beatitudes, which is to be poor in spirit: to recognize our need for God and open ourselves to his help. Jesus does not give us degrees of blessedness based on if we are 10% meek or 90% meek. He just says blessed are the meek. God calls each of us to our own paths, we have all been given different gifts and abilities, and we are faced with different situations than each other. Just because a saint such as Saints Perpetua and Felicitas were martyred in the arena doesn't make them better than you.  Nor does Jesus take a clipboard and mark down how poor in spirit we are and cross reference it to the Saints, or to each other.

We can look to the canonized saints as examples, but it would be a mistake to compare ourselves to them when our giftings and situations are probably vastly different. God just wants us to be faithful to him in our lives and the situations we'll be confronted with. While the saints may have gained fame and recognition for what they did or stood for, that was never their goal. They merely sought to serve God humbly, as best as they could in the situations that they faced. They were not seeking the admiration of the world, or of the church, but they were seeking only the approval of God. They modeled well the posture of being poor in spirit. They weren't perfect, but they acknowledged that, and in their imperfection they remained humble and faithful to God.

The goal of the Christian life isn't to be perfect. We don't need to accomplish as much as the canonized saints, whatever that means. In fact there is a quote that has been attributed to different Saints and church fathers "The devil can imitate everything. As for fasting, he never ate; as for watching, he never slept. But humble-mindedness and love he cannot imitate. So let there be a great effort on our part to have love within us and to hate pride, through which the devil fell out of heaven." We are not trying to *do* 'enough', but rather what we do comes out of the posture of humility, of being poor in spirit. The kingdom of God belongs to those who are poor in spirit. There is an invitation in the beatitudes to live a certain way, and by living this way, Jesus says that we will be blessed. We are not asked to live this way on our own; God joyfully offers us

his assistance in living out the beatitudes. In accepting his help we will gain a richness in life by living in a way that is counter cultural, a way that begins with a humbling of ourselves, and an acknowledgement that we can do nothing without God. In this acknowledgement of our spiritual poverty we have freedom to live as Jesus intended for his disciples. This blessedness is not marked by accomplishments, or by degrees of holiness, but it is marked by a poverty of spirit that recognizes our need for God, and this recognition allows for God to work in and through our lives. He has just as much joy in any one of us being faithful in the mundane aspects of life as he is with the most august of the Saints.

All Saints and All Souls are rightfully combined in many traditions because there should not be the distinction between the "great" saints of the past, and us, the saints of today. We are all in the same desperate need of God for everything and it is right to rely on him, especially because he will never fail us. And that reliance on God, that posture of being poor in spirit, leads us to a richness of life that can only come from a dependence on our Lord and Savior.

THE FIRST READING: Sirach 44:1-15

*Common English Bible version of the Apocrypha*

1 Now allow us to praise famous people and our ancestors, generation by generation. 2 The Lord created
great glory, his majesty from eternity. 3 They ruled in their kingdoms, and made a name with their power,
some giving counsel by their intelligence; some making pronouncements in prophecies; 4 some leading the
people by their deliberations, and by their understanding of the people's learning, giving wise words in their
instruction; 5 others devising musical melodies, and composing poems; 6 rich people endowed with
strength, living in peace in their dwellings—7 all of these were honored in their generation, a source of
pride in their time. 8 Some of them left behind a name so that their praises might be told. 9 For some there
is no memory, and they perished as though they hadn't existed. These have become as though they hadn't
been born, they and even their children after them. 10 But these were compassionate people whose
righteous deeds haven't been forgotten. 11 This will persist with their children; their descendants will be a
good legacy. 12 Their descendants stand by the covenants, and their children also, for their sake.13 Their
descendants will last forever, and their glory will never be erased. 14 Their bodies were buried in peace, but
their name lives for generations. 15 The people will tell of their wisdom, and the congregation will proclaim
their praise.