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Feast of All Saints  
7 November 2010  
Grace and Trinity Lutheran Churches, Wichita, KS  
Matthew 5:1-12

*In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*

What makes someone a saint?

Is it how they live their lives—helping others and so forth?

Is it putting up with a certain *unbearable* someone—“Oh, she’s a saint, alright!”

Is it a certain number of miracles performed in their name?

No. It’s none of these.

What makes a saint has nothing to do with the saint himself.

Jesus makes saints—

and He does it in a most *un*-extraordinary way:

He simply splashes them with water and speaks His name into them.

He puts a cross on their foreheads and says:

“I baptize you in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

(This is the seal on the forehead that Revelation is talking about, 7:3.)

What makes a saint is what Jesus does:

baptizing, absolving, feeding.

A saint is simply one of Jesus’ own.

So why does the Church set a day aside to remember the saints?

Well, because we’re quick to forget.

So focused on ourselves,

we forget that being a saint is something He does, and not we ourselves.

Not only that, but we forget that He has made *other* saints—not just us!

Some of these saints that the Lord has made by water and His Name have already gone before us.

They’ve died.

Their eyes have shut;

Their mouths have rested;

Their work is done—.

We remember them because death approaches us, too.

It’s easy to forget this with all we have to do:

Running the kids around,

Putting food on the table,

Volunteering,

Bowling, etc.

It’s easy to forget we’re dying.

But in the midst of this dying,  
 In the midst of your stress and busyness and worries,  
 The Lord draws you into His Church to remember All the Saints.

He takes you aside,  
 bidding you to sit on the mountain, and listen to *His* sermon:

*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*  
*Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.*  
*Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.*  
*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.*  
*Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.*  
*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*  
*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.*  
*Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

But what is it to be blessed?  
 What makes you happy?  
 What calms you and encourages you and takes your worry away?

Sure there are little things in this life that do the job for a moment:  
 A cup of coffee while the kids are still sleeping,  
 A friend who knows just what to say and when,  
 A dog, who somehow knows when to rub against your leg.

But as you know—these last only a minute.  
 Tomorrow it's back to the same old exams, deadlines, and crying babies.

But here, today, Jesus calls you to Himself—  
*He* is blessed and in Him are all the blessings of God!

What He gives doesn't last for just a minute; His gifts never cease.

With Jesus there is a *peace, which surpasses all understanding* (Php. 4:7).

This peace, this calm, this *blessing* is given and bestowed in the person of Jesus.  
 Indeed, the Beatitudes (the “Blessed is he, blessed are they”) are all about Jesus!

Jesus is *poor in Spirit* (Isa 29:19; 61:1)—He humbles Himself before God, becoming man.  
 Jesus *mourns* (Mt 23:37-38)—He laments for Jerusalem, for they've gone astray.  
 Jesus is *meek* (Mt 11:29)—He comes poor, lowly, and humble.  
 Jesus *hungers and thirsts for righteousness* (Mt 3:15)—He seeks its fulfillment at His baptism.  
 Jesus is *merciful* (Mt 8:3, 15; 9:6, 27)—healing the leper, the sick, the blind, and the lame.  
 Jesus is *pure in heart* (Mt 26:39)—entirely committed to the Father.  
 Jesus is *the peacemaker* (Isa 9:5-6; Mt 21:5)—reconciling you with God.  
 Jesus is *persecuted for righteousness' sake* (Mt 27:54)—even the centurion, full of awe at the crucifixion said, “Truly this was the Son of God!”

*Blessed* is Jesus.

But it doesn't stop there—  
 the beatitudes are all about Jesus;  
 but Jesus is all about *You*.

Everything He does is *for you*.  
 His becoming man,  
 His fleeing to Egypt as a baby,  
 His temptation and trials,  
 His preaching and teaching,  
 His miracles,  
 His suffering and death,  
 His rising and ascending—  
 All *for you*.

And today especially, Jesus delivers Himself to you.

What goes for Jesus, goes for you:  
 You are now *poor in Spirit*—for you come as a beggar.  
 You *mourn*—for suffering is great in this world.  
 You are *meek*—your strength is not of yourself, but another.  
 You *hunger and thirst for righteousness*—and so you come to the *altar* for food.  
 You are *merciful*—forgiving those who trespass against you.  
 You are *pure in heart*—committed to God in all things.  
 You are *the peacemaker*—speaking the redemptive word to your neighbor.  
 You are *persecuted for righteousness' sake*—as the world hated Christ, so it hates you.

You are *blessed* not because *you* do all these things,  
 But because Christ does all these things *in you*.

That's what makes you a saint—  
 Jesus doing His work in you and now *through* you.

The seal that went on your forehead at baptism—  
 the holy cross of Christ marking you as one redeemed by the blood of the Lamb—  
 now describes your life as a Saint of the Most High.

You are *Blessed*:  
 Yours is the Kingdom of Heaven—that is, Christ and His work.  
 You shall be comforted—in His Kingdom every tear is wiped away.  
 You shall inherit the earth—as Sons and daughters of the king, all that's His is yours.  
 You shall be satisfied—the gifts of the Lord are never lacking.  
 You shall receive mercy—for great is your reward in heaven.  
 You shall see God—see Him and not die!  
 You shall be called Sons of God—for by baptism you're put into Christ, *the* Son of God.

But your blessings are marked now by suffering.  
Your joy is hidden behind sorrow.

Today we mourn our loved ones who have died.

That we're still in a world where death even exists shows that greater blessings are still to come.

To be *blessed* is to be eternally happy, free, safe, cared for, comforted, encouraged, and at ease.  
Truly we are *blessed*, but we don't always see it.  
And we're quick to forget.

But our fathers and mothers, our spouses, our children, our friends—  
those who no longer mourn, suffer, or are persecuted—  
those saints whom the Lord has called home—  
these have received their reward and their blessing in full.

Now they feast at the Lord's table without any sin, worry, or doubt.  
Now they see the Lord face to face—  
now they joke and rejoice,  
they laugh and sing,  
and they await your joining them at the Marriage Feast of the Lamb.

The Lord's Supper is the place of blessing,  
The place where we join with All the Saints of heaven,  
The place where sin is forgiven,  
Tears are wiped away,  
Heaven is opened,  
And the saints rejoice.

*Do learn to love the Sacrament of the Altar as the meeting place with your beloved who have passed within the veil.<sup>1</sup>*

It's here we're gathered together with Christ *into* His body.  
And here, that we're joined together with each other, all members of the same body.

What goes for Christ goes for you and so also for the one kneeling next to you.

*Blessed are you when others 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.*

*In the Name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit*

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<sup>1</sup> Berthold Von Schenk, *The Presence*, 132.