

The Feast of All Saints and the Commemoration of the Faithful Departed (Observed - 2017)

Matthew 5:1–12 Seeing the crowds, [Jesus] went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him.

2 And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:

3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

5 “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

6 “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

7 “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

8 “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

9 “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

10 “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 **“Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.**

12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

In the Name of Jesus.

The Apostle John pledges that when we see The Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world—soon—we shall be like Him! Thus, the Beatitudes! For this is what HE is like! From ‘poor in spirit’ to ‘merciful’ and ‘making peace’ to the persecution; Jesus opens His mouth to His disciples and teaches them to learn from Him that the FIRST and LAST WORD that God, that Heaven, that your Heavenly Father now speaks to His own, is a

word of blessing!

Until we see face to face, rather than through the glass darkly as we do now, we are not only children of God—the gift of love unimagined!—but we are also in something the Word of God calls ‘the world.’ And ‘the world’ does not KNOW our Savior; and thus does not KNOW us. Oh, they can label us, assign us numbers, tax us and track us down, do their best to funnel us over into today’s flavor of idolatry. But when we ALREADY...ARE, as HE ARE—then the world does not, CANNOT grasp us at all!

How can you rob those who are attached to nothing in this world? How can you surpass in godliness and religious boasting those whose only prayer is that Heaven would have mercy on them? How can you RULE those people, those saints, whose King never plays tug-of-war with anyone? Whose standard is the cross of shame and whose crown is made of thorns? How can you make those men despair over their failings, whose faith is that God has reconciled the WORLD to Himself, not counting men’s sins against them?

My dear ones, when my mentor at the Seminary used to say to the class, ‘You do NOT correct one mistake by making the opposite mistake!’, he invariably ended up leaning over ME at my desk! And I had him for many classes! As if I was the only one in the room! At least the only one who needed to hear that!

There is a Kingdom to come that is ours, my dear ones. Your poor pastor has a fear, though, of somehow encouraging y’all to ‘push off’ the Last Day—as if your life in this world is somehow second-level, of lesser import than what is to come. So, I imagine

that I make the opposite error, focusing a lot on the good deeds to be done in this world. One of our dear sisters who passed away not long ago said on the way out of church, ‘Pastor, you can’t tell me TOO MUCH about my heavenly home!’

Let me try to correct the error, if I’ve made it!

Your Kingdom to come is FILLED with your King! The One Who assumed His Throne the Day He was nailed up on the tree of the cross, and laughed at until He died.

So, the Gospel is clear! You are a subject of this King, my dear saints, when you are UNKNOWN to this world! When those who curse you get nothing but blessings in return; when the ends and goals of this world exasperate you, drain the life and spirit from you, while you hunger and thirst for the God you cannot know to BE...WITH...YOU!

Your Baptism at This King’s Authority says that He is with you, always, until the End! And then... . And THEN....!

Then you will see Him as He is! The One Who made you, but Who is not at all LIKE you, but Who now—in Christ—IS ONE of YOU! ALL the way from the cradle to the grave; and, now, beyond!

This signals the ‘purity’ that John writes of. As HE is pure, thus WE purify ourselves HERE and NOW—until THERE, and THEN!

And WHAT is His PURITY?! Unheard of! Unimagined! NOT what you and I are wired for, set-for every day as we rise, under siege from the world! Thus, our Baptism!

OUR purity is HIS purity: the utter OPPOSITE of recoiling from those who are chiefs in offending God! This King of Heaven does NOT rule and judge and treat men harshly by the DISTANCE they are from the Holy God! Instead, the purity of the GOSPEL now, my dear ones, is the purity that led Him from Mary's womb, to a animal's food trough, to the muddy Jordan, to the execution hill, to the grave.

So when you land on next year's bulletin for commemoration, you will be with your God, your Jesus! And your Father will NOT treat you according to what you deserve! Because the purity of the LAW treats men according to their deeds. The purity of the GOSPEL shines where sin is conquered as sin forgiven!

No wonder the greatest and final gift the Lord Jesus gave before His passion was His Body and His Blood! He truly is the New King of the New Song in the New Kingdom!

And no wonder that the Old Psalm, today's, 149, sings of conquering the nations and so forth. Yes, but how?! The NEW SONG! The song of praise for the Lord—Hallelu-Yah!—and a two-edged sword in their hand! 'Sharper than any two-edged sword' is OUR weapon: The Word, the Gospel, God captured by the Prayer He gave us, and the boast He puts in our mouths: Be pure, O God, by purifying US!

So The Day is coming, dear saints—soon!—when you will never break God’s will! For you will see Him!

YOUR heaven, YOUR prepared mansion, dear Christians, is NOT...AT...ALL like the dreams awaiting those whose boast is some legal framework, and whose religion is nothing but hypocrisy. ‘SEE how I have OUTDISTANCED YOU!!!’ Ugh!

Those tears, the Lord will wipe away on that day. The ones the world brings to your eyes—AND the tears you bring to others. For the love withheld, the judgments leveled, the Gospel stopped-up. He will so pardon us on That Day, that He’s going to forgive us even for our neglect of His forgiving, or our own!

Can you imagine what your New Home will be like, when your poor pastor is WITH CHRIST?! SO pardoned—

I won’t have any need to push myself forward! You either! No need for seatbelts, or police, or lawyers, or hospitals!

Assured by my Savior—
AGAINST...ALL...EVIDENCE...I...PROVIDE!—guaranteed by Jesus’ Spirit that God has nothing better to do than to bless a man like me—and thus surely YOU!—my life will turn from having to protect and further myself and my prospects only; and will turn into furthering and comforting the next poor man, who may dream he’s as wicked as ME! And your life will be the same!

What a day to come! Our loved ones, in the faith, who have died—have...NOT...DIED! Not if DIE means anything that can HARM THEM—lever their GOD off of them in any way!

And you will see them! NOT because THEY out-performed anyone in the way the LAW demands! No; you will see them, as they see their Savior, and He sees them—because ALL that He can do with them is FORGIVE THEM!

And so, from heaven back to earth. Thus, our life now is THAT PURITY. YES, of course, we should also pursue the purity of the LAW. And there are TERRIBLE and NASTY things that our lords and masters in this world practice which should never even be MENTIONED among pure saints!

Fear, my dear ones, any such temptation. You cannot indulge yourself with those who despise God and His ways and yet call yourself a disciple of Jesus Christ. Part of our mourning and hungering and thirsting is that we are LAID BARE as law-breakers! And our prayer is for mercy and pardon and something other THAN the Law!

The purity that the children of God have—and pursue!—is the purity of our King! To be born with the impure and be baptized with them, to die between them and be buried with them. And yet, to rise from all that the world can dish out and—though the world cannot know this, understand, grasp, follow, agree, repent, believe—the more the next man, saint or sinner!, sins against us, the more he finds in us the purity of pardon and grace and mercy and peace.

I don't have it in me to pursue this purity, any more than y'all do! But we have God's pledge to us in our Baptism, AND His Body and His Blood!

So, look forward to That Day! I ASSUME that He will return before the sun sets even once more! But that's beneath my worry—that's why God exists, to set that day for US!

But also, dear saints, do not PUSH OFF that day! Meaning, be pure now, as you will be pure then! MORE is coming on the Last Day! MORE good from our God.

But you and I CANNOT be MORE accepted, MORE forgiven, MORE loved by God than we are right now!

There's a great Easter poem I wish to share, which I think fits today:

Easter Hymn - Cousin Henry Vaughan

Death and darkness get you packing,
 Nothing now to man is lacking;
 All your triumphs now are ended,
 And what Adam marred is mended,
 Graves are beds now for the weary,
 Death a nap, to wake more merry;
 Youth now, full of pious duty,
 Seeks in thee for perfect beauty;
 The weak and aged, tired with length
 Of days, from thee look for new strength;

And infants with thy pangs contest
As pleasant, as if with the breast.
Then, unto Him, who thus hath thrown,
Even to contempt thy kingdom down,
And by His blood did us advance
Unto His own inheritance,
To Him be glory, power, praise,
From this, unto the last of days!

HENRY VAUGHAN (1622-1695)

Not a bad way to end my little chat in the Name of Jesus!
Amen!