



ALL SAINTS

Study Notes for the Christian Layperson

by: Rev. Andrew Richard

Collect of the Day:

Almighty and everlasting God, You knit together Your faithful people of all times and places into one holy communion, the mystical body of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Grant us so to follow Your blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living that, together with them, we may come to the unspeakable joys You have prepared for those who love You; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Introit:

Psalm 31:1, 3, 5 (antiphon: Revelation 7:14b) — *They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb*

Psalm:

Psalm 149 (antiphon: v. 4) — *The LORD takes pleasure in His people; He adorns the humble with salvation*

First Reading:

Revelation 7:(2-8) 9-17 — *A picture of the Church Militant (2-8) and the Church Triumphant (9-17) together as the one baptized Church coming out of the great tribulation*

Gradual:

Revelation 7:14b; Psalm 84:5 — *These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation*

Epistle:

1 John 3:1-3 — *Beloved we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared*

Verse:

Hebrews 12:1a, 2a — *Alleluia. Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us [look] to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith. Alleluia.*

MATTHEW 5:1-12 ESV

Author and Date:

Matthew Levi the apostle around AD 50. The Gospel reading is the opening of the Sermon on the Mount (which spans chapters 5-7). This section is often called the Beatitudes, “the Blesseds.”

¹ 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:

- Jesus did not deliver His sermon to the crowds in general, but He withdrew to the top of a mountain and only after His disciples came to Him did He speak. The crowds certainly heard what Jesus said (in Matthew 7:28, at the end of His sermon, “The crowds were astonished”). Nevertheless, there is a distinction between those who hang on Jesus’ words (the disciples) and those who follow Jesus for other reasons (the crowds). On All Saints’ Day we do well to remember that the saints are *disciples*, who did not follow Jesus in order to get a problem-free earthly life or a full belly, but in order to hear His Word and be saved eternally.
- “He sat down.” This was the usual position for teaching. See, for example, Luke 4:17-21 when Jesus stands in the synagogue to read from the scroll of Isaiah and after reading sits down to explain it.
- Jesus’ preaching is summarized in Matthew 4:17 as, “Repent, for the reign of heaven has drawn near.” The “reign of heaven” is about Jesus’ work on behalf of sinful man. Therefore, when Jesus speaks about the reign of heaven, He is speaking about what *He* is doing. In light of this, we should see the Beatitudes first and foremost as descriptions of Jesus’ work for us, and secondly as blessings pronounced on us as His disciples. The following notes on the Beatitudes will follow this pattern: 1) general notes (when necessary), 2) Jesus, 3) us.

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

- “Spirit” can refer to the Holy Spirit, the spirit of man (the soul), or the realm of God. Here it is used in the third sense. “Poor in spirit” means being a beggar before God.
- Even though Jesus is known for the riches of his grace (Ephesians 1:7), He became as one who had nothing (Philippians 2:7). Jesus took our place as a poor beggar before God. “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you by His poverty might become rich” (2 Cor. 8:9).

- We confess that we are “poor, miserable sinners,” meaning we are beggars who have nothing to offer God. We hold out our empty hands to receive the Body and Blood of Christ. The saints whom we remember today are not such because of the riches of their own deeds, but because of the riches of Christ. You see that in Christ the Beatitudes are not commandments to God’s people, but descriptions of God’s people with promises attached to them.

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

- The promise of the First Beatitude is present tense, “theirs is.” Beatitudes 2-7 have a future promise. The Eighth Beatitude returns to “theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” As the Beatitudes relate to Christ, the future has come. As they relate to us, we still await the final fulfillment, but the fact that the future has come in Christ guarantees our future.
- Jesus mourns over Jerusalem’s unbelief in Matthew 23:37 and the inhabitants’ refusal to be His people. Yet Jesus does get a people for Himself and is comforted: “For You were slain, and by Your blood You ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation” (Revelation 5:9).
- We mourn on account of our sins, and we’re comforted by Christ’s Absolution. On All Saints’ Day we consider especially our mourning over the saints who have fallen asleep. We are comforted now that they rest secure in Christ, and we will be comforted even more on the Last Day as they (and we) live again by virtue of Christ’s resurrection.

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

- “Meek” means quiet, gentle, humble, unassuming, especially in relation to God, but also to men.
- Jesus describes himself as “meek and humble in heart” (Matthew 11:29). The Lord promised the land to Abraham and his offspring (Genesis 17:8). Christ, as Abraham’s offspring, has inherited the earth and His Church fills the whole world.
- You don’t get an inheritance because of what you’ve done, but because of whose child you are. So Jesus will say to us on the Last Day, “Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matthew 25:34).

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

- “Righteousness” here is the same as salvation.
- Jesus hungered and thirsted for righteousness, not for Himself, but for us. It wasn’t long after He cried out “I thirst!” (John 19:28) that Jesus’ thirst for your salvation was satisfied.
- The image of hungering and thirsting points us outside of ourselves. We can’t generate food from ourselves, and in the same way we can’t generate righteousness from ourselves. We await our final salvation on the Last Day, and until then we hear Christ’s words, “Take eat,” “Drink of it all of you,” and we are satisfied.

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

- Jesus is the epitome of the merciful one. He had mercy on us by dying for us. The Father had mercy on him by raising him from the dead.

- Jesus taught us to pray, “And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us,” and He explained this clearly with the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant (Matthew 18:21-35). Jesus makes us merciful by having mercy on us. When we find ourselves being merciful to others it is a reminder of Christ’s mercy toward us and a picture of the mercy we will receive in full on the Last Day.

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

- “Pure in heart” means completely faithful to God without deviation, unpolluted by idols and false gods.
- Jesus is the only One with a truly pure heart, like “a Lamb without blemish” (1 Peter 1:19). He has ascended back into the heavens and once again sees God face to face.
- Our hearts are not pure of themselves. But Christ has cleansed His Church by the washing of water with the Word and presented the Church to Himself “in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish” (Ephesians 5:26-27).

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

- Jesus is the One who made peace by the blood of his cross (Colossians 1:20), and he is called the Son of God.
- We are “peacemakers” in the same way that we are “the merciful.” Because Christ has made peace and reconciled us to the Father, we desire to have peace with all people and desire that the whole world be reconciled to God.

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

- “For righteousness’ sake” means because of Christ the Righteous One. Jesus is that Righteous One, and suffered and died for it. Nevertheless, He brought the reign of heaven to earth by His suffering and death.
- The world is hostile toward us as Christians just as it was hostile toward Christ. This mark of the holy cross will always accompany Christ’s continued work in the world.

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.”**

- Here Jesus shifts from the general to the specific: “you.” This interprets and personalizes the previous Beatitude. Persecution often takes the form of reviling and speaking evil falsely.
- The final phrase, “for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you,” reminds us that we are in good company. We rejoice in our sufferings because they identify us with Christ, and we remember those who have gone before us who have suffered similarly and have now entered into glory. This gives us hope and strength to endure in these latter days.

