

Scripture focus: *When Jesus^[a] saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. ² Then he began to speak, 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 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 receive 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 for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

¹¹ *“Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely^[b] on my account. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

Reflection: On this All Saints’ Day, the lectionary takes us to Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount and the Beatitudes. As we remember and give thanks for those who have gone before us in faith, who have run the race, who have laid the foundation, and who have inspired, taught, and influenced us; these words remind us that following in Jesus’ way, although difficult and challenging, leads to blessing.

John Dear, author of *The Beatitudes of Peace: Meditations on The Beatitudes, Peacemaking, and The Spiritual Life*, writes about finding his way to the Chapel of the Beatitudes on a hill overlooking the Sea of Galilee in Israel. It’s a small, circular church with a tall, gray dome, with the words of the Beatitudes written on the walls of the eight-sided church. Overcome by their message, Dear writes, “It dawned on me there and then that these words were the hope and prayer and vision of Jesus, and he was quite serious about them. They outlined the way Jesus wanted his followers to live. They were the blueprint for Christian discipleship, the job description of every Christian. Suddenly, I realized that this included me! These words demanded to be lived, and not by someone else, but at that moment, by me.”

We give thanks today for all those who have taken those words seriously and have attempted to live them in their lives. They are words that are demanding to be lived even now, today, by us, in our divided and contentious and anxious world. Those who take them seriously may find themselves not with the crowd, but instead set apart to live life differently ... but blessed! Contrary to the ways of the world, Jesus says those who are blessed are poor in spirit, meek, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, those who are persecuted. At this moment in time, maybe especially now, we need a world filled with those who are seeking peace and are hungering and thirsting for righteousness, even

enduring persecution to follow in this way. May we be found among those following in this way!

Prayer: We give thanks, O God, for the saints who have followed in your way and received the blessings of your love and grace. Fill us with your vision of love and grace so that we, too, may be led to live a life of blessing, this day and always. Amen.

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