

NOV1.E

ALL SAINTS SUNDAY

November 4, 2007

Daniel 7:1-3,15-18

Ephesians 1:11-23

Luke 6:20-31

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<sup>20</sup>Then he looked up at his disciples and said:

“Blessed are you who are poor,  
for yours is the kingdom of God.

<sup>21</sup>“Blessed are you who are hungry now,  
for you will be filled.

“Blessed are you who weep now,  
for you will laugh.

<sup>22</sup>“Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you □ on account of the Son of Man. <sup>23</sup>Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets.

<sup>24</sup>“But woe to you who are rich,  
for you have received your consolation.

<sup>25</sup>“Woe to you who are full now,  
for you will be hungry.

“Woe to you who are laughing now,  
for you will mourn and weep.

<sup>26</sup>“Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets.

<sup>27</sup>“But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, <sup>28</sup>bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. <sup>29</sup>If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. <sup>30</sup>Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. <sup>31</sup>Do to others as you would have them do to you.

Seminary is a four year program, after you get your undergraduate degree. In the first year there are some requirements. Greek, of course. They won't let you into seminary without at least enough Greek to get around in the New Testament. In the first year you have to take one semester of preaching and one semester of worship and two semesters of systematic theology. **Systematic theology is the study of how to think about God.** Our professor for both semesters was a member of the systematic theology staff named Hans Schwarz. (Yes, as a matter of fact, he was from Germany.) As you might imagine with a man of Dr. Schwarz' demeanor and background – he had a highly developed notion of rules and good order. In our first class he was telling us the requirements, what books we would

read, what our projects would be, the dates of the tests, and the format of the papers we would write. They would be type written, double spaced, with one inch margins. A class mate raised her hand and informed Dr. Schwarz that she did not type. Dr. Schwarz looked at her for a long time. I remember his expression well. I have worn that expression while trying to program a VCR. Finally he said, "There is always the possibility that you can learn how."

I am convinced, that Dr. Schwarz was **not** worried about reading that student's papers. He **was** worried about having a student in a *theology* class who was willing to accept inadequacy as good enough. **A theology student who thinks improvement beyond reach – is a student who has no notion of the nature of theology.**

Today is All Saints Sunday; this is a major festival of the Church Year. This is the day we remember who the blessed Saints of God are and what the saints are called to do. As the Church, we are called to order our lives by the wisdom of the saints. We are called to live in the Kingdom of God – because that's where saints belong.

Wisdom is **not** knowing about people. Knowledge of people, knowledge of ourselves, is **not** where we will find the Kingdom of God.

Saints are people who live in the Kingdom of God. There are those who think the Kingdom of God is the next life. They suppose the Kingdom of God is where you get to live after you're through with this world. The people who think that about the Kingdom of God are the same ones who think that saints are dead people who have finished with this world and are now living in the Kingdom of God.

Jesus tells us differently. We have an example in this morning's Gospel lesson which is assigned for All Saints' Sunday. Jesus announces who the blessed saints of God are. It is not a list that we would collect by knowing the world and knowing ourselves. The blessed of God are people with different values. Jesus tells us the world is full of blessed people who see things from God's point of view.

There are people who **know the world**. They know what works and what doesn't and they will live their lives getting ahead, turned in on themselves, and worried about how much they have. And, with an uncomfortable clarity, Jesus says, "Woe to those people." Those will be unhappy people – and Jesus wants more for his followers. Jesus tells us how to be part of God's Kingdom; he tells us how to be saints. "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. ... Give to everyone who begs from you...Do to others as you would have them do to you."

Saints see things from God's point of view. Saints who are still drawing breath live in the company of all those saints who have gone before. Those who have died and those who will be born in the future and we who are alive today are all living together in the Kingdom of God. Because God's Kingdom is wherever God is in charge. God is in charge of the lives of his saints.

Saints live in the here and now. Saints are very much aware of the world. But the things that this world so often values are not the Gospel. The values of this world don't have much to do with loving your enemies and giving to other people. But you are a saint.

The Gospel is that God *changes* the world. God *changes* us. *We are* Saints. God makes us Saints. A Saint is a person whom God loves. That is a very long list. You may not feel very saintly – that doesn't excuse you from sainthood. God's love has made you a saint and you have responsibilities. God calls his Saints to change the world – and bring it a little more in line with his Kingdom. You might raise your hand and say, "I don't know how to do that." But the first lesson of systematic theology – the study of how to think about God – is, "There's always a chance that you could learn how."

Each of us exercises our sainthood in a different way. God has given us so many different talents and different opportunities.

We are constantly presented with clear opportunities to serve God. We came here to worship; we have educational opportunities; the Hill Country Community Ministries is finishing

a food drive; we can pray and God will listen. We are part of a congregation that has taken on a task to reach out to this community with the love of God. It is not a task any of us can do alone. God doesn't ask us to do anything alone.

He calls us to serve his Kingdom as his saints.

Saints pray. We ask God what he wants us to do. We listen, earnestly, for the will of God. Saints believe that God gives them the ability to accomplish whatever he calls them to do.

We can improve our life together and we can reach out to more people in a growing community. Woe to us if we say the world won't let us do that. We are saints and we are called to change the world into the Kingdom of God.