

"For All the Saints" - Matthew 5.1-12 – Rev. Jeffrey B. Childs

What's the word?... Have you ever been talking and realized that there is a word you want to say, and it is there in your brain somewhere, but you just cannot come up with it? That is a bit of the way I feel about some of the translations of the Beatitudes. "Blessed" is an old-fashioned word. I use it, but I am old! I have struggled with the more contemporary translations of the Bible using the word "Happy". I think the modern-day notion I hear most often from people might be better translated as "Lucky" or "Fortunate." Listen to a couple of the Beatitudes like this:

"Happy are people who grieve, because they will be made glad."

"Lucky" are people who are hopeless, because the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

"How fortunate" are people who grieve, because they will be made glad.

BTW I still prefer the old English translation of "Blessed!" but that is just me and my theology. I believe we are blessed! I do not believe in Luck. But I want you to hear these words of Jesus in the way you hear them best. "Happy" just rings hollow for me. I like the words of Eugene Peterson in his translation - The Message.

The underlying notion needed to understand the parables is **Perspective of Time**. It may not feel Happy, Blessed or Fortunate now, but it may in time and the perspective of time. The hardest lessons are often times the best, because they help us to grow and here they help us to grow in our faith. It is like in the poem "Footprints in the Sand." (just show a picture of one set of footprints not the whole poem). Do you remember it? I occasionally read this at funerals. One of the things I enjoy about this poem is not the obvious comfort that comes from knowing Jesus carries us at difficult times, but that there is a perspective in which we can and should see things. When it comes to bad things, they tend to flow from worse to better in perspective with time. Pain subsides, and time heals all wounds.

In the Beatitudes, I find Jesus offering us the **Perspective of Time** that although these are unfortunate or bad situations; yet we should be happy, blessed, or fortunate to know it will get better and if we put it into perspective, we can look back and discover what all we have learned through our experience. Sometimes such blessedness or happiness is hidden and needs the element of time to be revealed.

Jesus helps us focus not on the "here and now" but on the "then and there." On this Sunday when we remember those who have passed away, we are not to think so much back to then as we are to the future and seeing them again where they are now and where we are headed. We may be grieving now but we will be happy when we see them again on the other side of the pearly gates. I believe that for Jesus, for God, the past, present and future come together in the singularity of each moment of time. In the traditional communion liturgy, it comes together in the affirmation, "*Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.*" It is past, present and future altogether. As we come to the table today may we join all the Saints from the first disciples at that Lord's Supper all the way down to those who have passed away this year. And may we see them around the table as we anticipate that heavenly banquet where we will all be reunited again.

Perhaps if there is any saving grace for using the word Happy in the Beatitudes, it is as a reminder for me that in the end, there will be a happy ending! I believe in living “happily ever after.” Jesus might have told these Beatitudes and the parables to help people enter into the happy ending even before the ending. Living “Happily ever after” can start today for those who choose to follow Jesus and enter God’s kingdom. Begin to live a life of blessedness and gratitude. You can either wait to be happy at the end or start sharing and living that happiness now in full anticipation that the best is yet to come. Live that way. Be Blessed! Alleluia and Amen.

There Are Saints All Around Us

Rev. Jeffrey B. Childs 10/30/23

There are saints all around us,
People who follow Jesus,
Maybe they lived long ago,
Or they’re loved ones that we know.
There are saints all around us,
People who follow Jesus.

St. Paul a great picture paints,
When he calls church people saints.
Be a saint by what you do,
And I’ll try to be to be one too.
There are saints all around us,
People who follow Jesus.