November 1, 2026 · All Saints' Day
The Rev. James Wyatt
Revelation 7:9-17 • Psalm 34:1-10, 22 • 1 John 3:1-3 • Matthew 5:1-12

Blessed

We have spent most of this year exploring the Gospel of Matthew, but it's only now, near the end of the year, that we come to what is effectively the beginning of the Gospel, the start of Jesus's first big sermon, his first teaching, which really establishes the context for everything in the rest of the gospel. And he starts it off with a bang, with these pronouncements of blessing, these beatitudes.

There's a couple of things I want you to notice about the beatitudes. First, they're not commandments. Jesus isn't saying, thou shalt mourn, so that you may be comforted, or thou shalt be merciful, so that you may receive mercy. He's especially not telling us that we should hope to be persecuted or actively seek out persecution so that we can claim the best seats in the kingdom of heaven. This isn't a list of instructions. It's a statement of fact: The poor in spirit are blessed. Those who mourn are blessed. The meek are blessed. Jesus is using the same language that our Psalm this morning uses: "happy are they who trust in the Most High" is just a different translation of the same word, "blessed." A simple statement of fact.

Second, it's not exactly a statement of obvious fact. Quite the opposite. Jesus is coming right out and saying that the people we are most likely to consider unfortunate or unhappy—those who mourn, those who get trampled on in the rat race, those who are aching to see justice done—are in fact blessed. Now, that's not the same thing as saying that they are secretly happy, that they have some secret to happiness that the rich and powerful can't fathom. It's not telling them that they *should* be happy, despite their circumstances. They are blessed—they are the recipients of God's favor. In the words of commentator Matthew Skinner, Jesus is "declaring that people who have been denied peace and satisfaction will find it, though him. Jesus promises to embrace the unembraced. That's the blessing." (*Matthew*, p. 7) So these people who are struggling with the harsh realities of life are blessed with God's favor. And God's favor doesn't look like earthly prosperity or power or success as we usually measure it.

Now, the third thing I want you to notice is that each of these statements of fact is a combination of a thing that is true now—these people who don't seem blessed really are—and a thing that will be true in the future—these blessed people will receive good things from the hand of God. And the blessing in the present moment comes from the glorious future when that blessing will be fulfilled.

"Beloved, we are God's children now," the first letter of John says; "what we will be has not yet been revealed." We are God's children now, we are blessed now, we have found favor and grace from the source of all goodness now; and who can really say what awaits us in the future? I appreciate the letter's honesty in that. Like, we have a lot of promises, a lot of assurance, about the blessed future that awaits us, and even the letter writer goes on to say, "What we do know is this: when [Christ] is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is." We also know that those who mourn will be comforted, that the meek will inherit the earth, that those who hunger and thirst for righteousness will finally be satisfied, that the merciful will receive mercy, that the pure in heart will see God, and that the peacemakers will be called children of God. And we know that the Crucified One, the Lamb who was slaughtered, in the evocative image of Revelation, will be our shepherd, will guide us to springs of the water of life, and will wipe every tear from our eyes.

That's our hope, and it's a powerful hope. We might not know exactly what that's going to look like, for it has not yet been revealed. But that's the hope we live by, the hope that blesses us here and now. It's the hope that makes saints of us, that reaches back from the promised future to transform us here and now, shaping us more and more into the likeness of Christ, the very best versions of ourselves.

You might have noticed that I tend to be very generous in my reading of who all these texts are meant to apply to. I've been throwing around "we/us" pronouns quite freely this

morning, even when talking about our text from Revelation about “they who have come out of the great ordeal; [who] have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” Yes, the author of Revelation was thinking of martyrs, those who were persecuted for their faith, those who suffered and died in the bloodthirsty spectacles that passed for justice in the Roman world. Revelation suggests that these saints have a special place around the throne of God, recognizing their tremendous acts of self-sacrifice and love. And the beatitudes, too, declare a particular blessing on those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, when people revile them and persecute them and utter all kinds of evil against them falsely on Jesus’s account—theirs is the kingdom of heaven, Jesus says, and great is their reward. But our tradition tells us that we are one body—in the words of our collect this morning, God has “knit together [God’s] elect in one communion and fellowship in the mystical body of … Christ our Lord.” The hope of these promises belongs to all of us who are part of that body, joined in Baptism to Christ in his death and in his resurrection. And even as we look to the martyrs and the many other saints as examples of “virtuous and godly living” (again using the language of our collect), our hope is that their example will lead us to those same “ineffable joys” that they enjoy, since we are all part of the one Body.

We are all part of the one Body—one communion and fellowship that extends through all the ages and across the whole world, maybe across the countless worlds of the whole universe. We baptize Eddie this morning, as we were all baptized, into the household of God, the communion of saints—not just into this beautiful little community, but into a family that spans the cosmos, countless generations past, present, and yet to come. This is a bold and big thing we are doing! And I think it’s especially beautiful that we claim this big, bold blessing for the smallest among us.

Blessed are the meek, little Eddie, for they shall inherit the earth. You are blessed, you are a child of God now; what you will be has not yet been revealed. But to you, as to all of us, belongs the hope of all the saints, that the Lamb will be our shepherd and will guide us to springs of the water of life, and God will wipe away every tear from our eyes.

Thanks be to God!