

SERMON FOR NOVEMBER 6, 2022

THEME: BLESSINGS FOR A BROKEN PEOPLE

TEXT: MATTHEW 5: 1-12

And he opened his mouth 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 shall be comforted.**5** “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.**6** “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.**7** “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.**8** “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.**9** “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.**10** “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**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.

In the name of Jesus:

In 1998 the St. John's Bible was commissioned at an Abbey by the same name in Minnesota. In this Bible there are many artistic renderings on a variety of Bible passages. You can see some of these renderings if you were to google St. John's Bible, and there you can not only see them but you could order the artwork for yourself.

If you were to turn to the Beatitudes in Matthew 5 in the St. John Bible you would be able to see the artwork based on the Beatitudes. On one side of the page, there is a column of Jesus' words in bright gold type, to convey the

richness of Jesus' words. On the other side of the page, in a different column, there is amalgamation of words printed in assorted colors, facing different directions, arrayed to show in some cases words that look to be disjointed, a series of broken words. What a dichotomy! What a message, in that in the midst of the brokenness of our world, Jesus' words shine forth giving hope and life to the world.

In our text for today, we see Jesus sitting on the mount and crowds are gathering all around Him. They come to Jesus because they are broken by sin, each and everyone of them are fallen creatures. They come with heartache and pain. A parent is close to dying. A child is sick. A spouse has died. A neighbor is hungry. One is not of their right mind, another demon possessed. Each comes with a problem they are plagued with. They come with their own issues. Issues that reveal pain, sorrow, a fallen world, sin and brokenness.

And here Jesus doesn't reject the fallen and the broken. He instead invites them to sit for a while, to gather around and listen to Him. Jesus doesn't tell them to keep a stiff upper lip. He doesn't tell them things are bound to get better. He doesn't chide, He doesn't scold, He doesn't reject. What Jesus does instead is that He blesses those who come to Him.

And so the Beatitudes begin with the words: “Blessed.” Blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are those who mourn, who are hungry, blessed are those who are persecuted and reviled for the sake of Jesus. For their reward is great in heaven.

These words reveal why Jesus came and to whom He came. He came not to condemn sinners but to save them. He comes not to reject but to accept, with open arms. Jesus says in His own words later in His ministry: “I have come not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.” “For Jesus came to give life and give it abundantly.”

Jesus gives life, eternal life, because He came down from heaven to pay the payment to make sinners children of God. Jesus came not to be served but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many. Jesus came to save sinners, to which the Apostle Paul remarks: “The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.”

The autumn months are a great time to grow grass. And so, with that in mind, Luann and I have set out to do some lawn renovations. Grass seed was planted in our back yard and I have been tasked with the responsibility of making certain that the grass seed stays moist. That means almost every day

I am out with the host and sprinkler system arranging for the newly planted seed to be watered. As I was out the other day, I noticed that the seed that was planted was starting to grow. But I also noticed something else, the sprinkler that I was using was throwing water on some brown patches and there was rejuvenated grass growing as well. The watering also had an effect on all of the grass around the seeds.

That is how God's love in Jesus works. God blesses you with His love for you in Jesus, and in the process His blessings flow out from you into the lives of others, flowing into the brokenness of their lives giving them hope and new life in Jesus. That is the way it has always been. God chose His people Israel, blessing them to be a blessing. Blessed by God they were to give hope to the hopeless, they were to care for and feed those in need. Freely they had received mercy, freely they were to share mercy.

And that is what Jesus is saying to those on the mount and to you and me today. Baptized in the name of Jesus, you are His new creation, created in Jesus to bless others in all that you do. Connected to Jesus as the Vine, you are now His branches called to bear much fruit for Him. Blessed to be a blessing.

I had a recent conversation with a recovering alcoholic, a member of AA, Alcoholics Anonymous. He mentioned that he gave thanks to God that he was

an alcoholic. He went on to explain that if it wasn't for his bouts with the bottle, he never would have recognized his need for a Savior. AA brought him back to church. AA kept him connected to Jesus and His Church. And so this recovering alcoholic gave thanks to God for his disease, for in and through that disease He was blessed by God. And to show his gratefulness, he made it his mission to help other alcoholics, driving them to meetings, helping them in their time of need, he was blessed by God to be a blessing to others.

In the same way, you and I are addicted to sin! And so we come to church, confessing our sins, trusting in Jesus, who is faithful and just and who forgives our sins, cleansing us from all unrighteousness. Cleansed by the blood of Jesus, forgiven of all of our sins, it is now our joyful mission and responsibility to go from this place, blessed by God into the brokenness of our world, to be a blessing to others, pointing them and showing them Jesus. For that is why Jesus came into our broken world, to bless us, all so that we can share His blessings with others.

To the glory of God and in Jesus' name

Amen