

*20Then he looked up at his disciples and said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. 21"Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled. "Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. 22"Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. 23Rejoice 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. 24"But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. 25"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. 26"Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets.*

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

It is All Star Sunday. You know how that goes – when the very best players in the league are gathered on special teams and the All Stars play the All Stars. Only the very best are invited to participate – no bench sitters on this team. All Star games are for the soccer players that can find a way to score the winning goal at the last second – for the goalie that make the impossible save when the match is in doubt. All Star games are when the best football players in the county or the state, or the nation to show off their athleticism. All Star games are for the cream of the crop in the NBA to show their stuff. Today is All Star Sunday – for the church of Jesus Christ. All Saints Sunday we call it. The Holy ones, the Saints are honored this day.

You know some of their names, Mother Teresea, Peter, Paul, Augustine, Mary. What a line-up! Peter was there that day when Jesus said, "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. 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. Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods do not ask for them again. Do to others as you would have them do to you.”

Now Peter did not do so well with these words – remember how he took his sword and cut off the ear of the high priest’s slave? But Mother Teresa took these words to heart – so did Martin Luther King Jr. though I do not think anyone has officially named him to the all star team of saints. Maybe you have been working to take these words to heart as well. Certainly our Lord Jesus who spoke these words lived them through the whipping, the mocking and the crucifying that these words led to. Father, forgive them, he prayed for those who were putting him to death.

And did the crowds cheer? Did everyone cry out – what a noble man? Were the play by play announcers broadcasting replays of his courage and faith to millions who were watching? No, only a few were watching – most all of them were laughing at him. Mark tells us that even the women who loved him most watched from a distance.

It is a lonely thing to be on this All Star team.

So his disciples would never forget that, Jesus spoke other words to them:

Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of man. 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.

The very things that in this world shout – you’re a loser - are the signs of God’s favor. Being poor, weeping, being hungry, being hated and reviled and defamed. And in the midst of it all living the words Jesus spoke. Praying for the very ones who are ridiculing you. Trusting that the love of God is greater than all else.

And so that we would not miss the point Jesus spoke these woes: Woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. 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. Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets. These are the good things in life – wealth and laughter and a good reputation and Jesus says, woe to you when these are yours.

I hope some of you are as troubled by these words of Jesus as I am.

I can only understand these words by examining my own heart when I am on top. When folks are saying good things about me and bad things about some other preacher I am sure the folks have it right. And when I have more money in my bank account than my neighbor I am sure there is something right about this world. I have no trouble finding reasons why I should be blessed and another less blessed. I am addicted to comparing myself to others – making myself feel good by seeing what my neighbor lacks. Now maybe your heart is not evil as mine is. I hope it is not. But I think Jesus was talking to people like me when he spoke these words.

But this is All Star Sunday – All Saints Sunday – no time to focus on a bench warmer like me. Let's sing the praises of Mary, and Paul, Mary Magdalene, St. Francis, St. Benedict. Let's tell stories about how wonderful they were.

But if one of them was here today, this is the story that would be told.

There is only one All Star. Jesus. Only one who from birth to death lived the love of God, believed and trusted in God in every moment. Don't honor me – pray to me, worship me – for I am in the presence of God because Jesus gave me his place. Not because I earned it but because he loves me. There is no other way to come into the eternal presence of God than to receive Jesus' own place that he gives to you. A gift. Given to you. Believe it.

All Saints Sunday – this all star team includes the poor and the hungry, the persecuted and the weepers – anyone and everyone who needs what Jesus has won. Only those who demand to make this team on their own merits will be excluded.

All Saints Sunday. Many of you came today with a loved one in your heart and on your mind. One who has died, or maybe one who suffers now. Gather together all the love you have for this one and know that all of your love is like a single raindrop when compared to the ocean of love Jesus has for this one. Whether in life or in death entrust this loved one to Jesus' love. All will be well.

And entrust yourself to Jesus' love as well. You will be eternally blessed. Amen.