

*When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. 2Then he began to speak, 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 will be comforted. 5“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. 6“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. 7“Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. 8“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. 9“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. 10“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11“Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. 12Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

How do you measure your life? By your height, by your weight, by your income, by your home? By your clothing, by your friendships, by your ability to think, by your power, by your success? Do you measure your life by your appearance, by the grades you get in school or by the group that you belong to? Do you measure your life by others success – by how the children you have taught have done – by how your own children succeed in school or in athletics or in their work? Do you measure your life by your marriage – by the love that is in your home? Do you measure your life by your goodness, by the respect you have in the community, by how you are able to be helpful to others?

Maybe it depends on where we are in life. Certainly being measured by our peers is far more important to a thirteen year old than it is to a seventy-three year old.

On this All Saints Sunday I invite you to think how your life might be measured as family and friends gather to lay your body to rest. When your earthly life is done what will have mattered? Moments of laughter shared – faithfulness – ways that others were able to help you and you them – these will be remembered. So many of the ways we measure ourselves may seem trivial then – appearance, old soccer scores, class rank. What will matter then is the person we were – and God. How does God measure a life? Maybe not the way we would expect.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.”

When you are poor in spirit, or full of sorrow, or without power or hungering and thirsting for the right because everything is wrong, my guess is that you do not feel very blessed. But Jesus declares you blessed – promises blessing without giving any reason why. You and I are attracted to people rich in spirit – with a smile stretching from ear to ear. We are attracted to winners – people that are righteous and who make good things happen – not those who hunger and thirst for these things. But God does not measure things the way we do.

‘Blessed are the merciful for they will receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.’ It is easier to understand why God would want those who have mercy, who have integrity which is one way to understand being pure in heart, people who make peace and who fight for righteousness.

From all of these beatitudes I sense that God’s thoughts are not our thoughts, God’s ways are not our ways. But what might life be like for us if God’s thoughts became our thoughts - God’s ways became our ways?

Jesus wants that for you and for me. When your spirit is beaten down – when you are poor in spirit Jesus wants you to trust in his promise of blessing. When the darkness of sorrow blots out any light, Jesus wants you to remember his promise of comfort. When the whole world seems to be trampling on you, Jesus wants you to be confident in his word that the whole earth will be yours. When you wander through a desert of wrong: wrong done to you, wrong done by you – Jesus wants you to know that God’s kingdom is yours. Jesus wants faith for you for he will have the final word - not your brokenness, nor your sorrow, not your meekness nor wrong winning so often but Jesus and his love will rule your tomorrow.

That is why you can live by mercy in a world that labels mercy weakness. That is why you can be pure in heart in a world that seems to reward deviousness. That is why you can make peace when the violence of war is having the last word, that is why you can seek God's shalom – God's wholeness – for everyone in a world that rewards selfishness.

Jesus gets the last word.

When you are measuring your life remember that: Jesus gets the last word. And that word is a word of blessing for the poor in spirit, and the merciful and the meek, and for those who hunger for God's goodness for everyone. That word is a word of blessing for all of you who sorrow. Amen.