November 6, 2016

Matthew 5:1-12

Remember

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Matthew 5:1-12 New Revised Standard Version

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

 “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

 “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.

 “Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

 “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

 “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

 “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

This year in May someone who I had had a relationship with for 12 years took his own life. My hairdresser and friend Kyle Dennis committed suicide in May. He and I had known each other for 12 years and I would talk about my church and he would come occasionally to whatever church I was at. But in September he started coming regularly to this church. He loved it. He brought his friends Kimberly and Kelly and they all said that they felt embraced and welcomed and loved in this place. This sanctuary was filled as we celebrated his life, and everyone was in disbelief that he had taken his own life.

We have had a lot going on in our world. We have had police firing rubber bullets at protestors in Standing Rock, North Dakota. We have the Presidential elections Tuesday. We have a lot on our hearts and minds. Today is a day for us to hold all that while we grieve those we have lost this year, those who have joined the heavenly saints, the chorus of the angels. This year, in this moment, we celebrate and we remember those who have touched our lives and deepened our faith by the witness of their faith.

I remember when my stepdad died, my mom said that part of her grieving was feeling for a while like her husband was perfect. As her heart ached, she could only think of the aspects of her spouse that she would deeply miss. As her grieving progressed, she remembered those things about her husband that drove her crazy. She was able to grieve for him as an imperfect human being. Sometimes when we think of the saints in our lives we only think of the good that they did, and the good people that they were. I mean we call it All Saints Sunday! Not “regular person who have died” Sunday. All Saints! And when I say saint I think of Mother Teresa and then I feel unworthy and like being a saint is unattainable.

The scripture for All Saints Sunday is the Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount. They are all about Jesus blessing everyone present that day. Jesus is lavishing blessing on the people around him, those that “society doesn’t seem to have much time for, people in pain, people who work for peace instead of profit, people who exercise mercy instead of vengeance.”[[1]](#footnote-2)

Jesus is blessing people who never seem to receive blessing otherwise.[[2]](#footnote-3) That is so Jesus! All Saints Sunday is a day for us to remember blessings. We remember and celebrate the lives of those who have gone before and shared their faith and love with us. We remember and celebrate those who have been a blessing to us. I think about David Culp. He wanted to die well and his beloved wife Laura helped him to enter God’s loving arms with peace and strength. I think about John Parrish. Do you know those people that can’t say no? I could ask John to help with anything at the church and he would say yes. Patsy Affleck blessed me and lifted my spirits. She would come to receive Communion with her face filled with joy. She told everyone that she loved them.

Our Scripture for today says,

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

 “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

 “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.

 “Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

 “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

 “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

 “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Can you imagine Jesus standing among us saying Blessed are those who doubt. Blessed are those who are afraid. Blessed are those who feel hopeless and lost and afraid. Blessed are those who take their own lives. There have been so many who have committed suicide this year. We have two in our own list of saints from this church. Ben Johansen and Kyle Dennis. My heart breaks for their friends and family.

  Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are those who have buried their loved ones. Blessed are those who don’t know how they will go on. Blessed are those who have loved enough to know what loss feels like. Blessed are the mothers of the miscarried.[[3]](#footnote-4) Blessed are “those who can’t fall apart because they have to keep it together for everyone else.”[[4]](#footnote-5)

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. “Blessed are those who no one else notices”.[[5]](#footnote-6) The night shift workers and the ones who wash the dishes after the church potluck. The teenagers and the ones who sit in the back row at church. Lori Mall would sit in the back row with her husband, Harold. I had no idea that she was living with a cancer diagnosis. Blessed are the unemployed, the underemployed, the homeless, and the closeted. Blessed are those who are in wheelchairs or live with disabilities. You are of heaven and Jesus blesses you.[[6]](#footnote-7)

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the illegal immigrants, the refugees, the ones in prison, the wrongly accused and innocent. These are the ones Jesus was drawn to. Blessed are foster children and every child who wants to feel safe and learn in school, but doesn’t. “Blessed are those who know there has to be more than this. Because they are right.”[[7]](#footnote-8)

Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. Blessed are the burnt-out social workers and the overworked teachers and nurses and the lawyers who take pro-bono cases. Inez Hicks brought many folks to church. She was the doctor’s appointment driver and the errand helper. When Inez began to have poor health, she was more concerned about how she was going to continue to help others in the way that she always had, than she was worried about herself. Blessed are the kids who stand up to the bully. Blessed are the ones who lift up people over money. Blessed are those who have forgiven others. Blessed is everyone who has ever forgiven me especially when I didn’t deserve to be forgiven.[[8]](#footnote-9)

Jesus blessed us all because that is our God. God took all of the things that we are embarrassed about, that we hide, and God came in Jesus as a vulnerable baby and blessed all human weakness and all human vulnerability. Jesus wept at the news of his friend Lazarus’ death and Jesus forgave those who hung him on the cross.[[9]](#footnote-10) Jesus constantly blessed the weak in a world that feels like it only lifts up the strong.

If you feel lost or unseen or alone or wracked with grief or no longer useful, may we all know today that God makes beauty out of dust, and that it is our weakness that qualifies us to be a saint. We need God. It is our hunger and our desire for God that brings us to this place. Blessed are all of us. May we become the very blessing that we receive from our loving God today.

1. Inspired by Rev. Nadia Bolz-Weber’s alternative Blessings for All Saints Sunday. http://www.patheos.com/blogs/nadiabolzweber/2014/11/some-modern-beatitudes-a-sermon-for-all-saints-sunday/ [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. http://www.patheos.com/blogs/nadiabolzweber/2014/11/some-modern-beatitudes-a-sermon-for-all-saints-sunday/ [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. http://www.patheos.com/blogs/nadiabolzweber/2014/11/some-modern-beatitudes-a-sermon-for-all-saints-sunday/ [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. http://www.patheos.com/blogs/nadiabolzweber/2014/11/some-modern-beatitudes-a-sermon-for-all-saints-sunday/ [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. http://www.patheos.com/blogs/nadiabolzweber/2014/11/some-modern-beatitudes-a-sermon-for-all-saints-sunday/ [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. http://www.patheos.com/blogs/nadiabolzweber/2014/11/some-modern-beatitudes-a-sermon-for-all-saints-sunday/ [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. http://www.patheos.com/blogs/nadiabolzweber/2014/11/some-modern-beatitudes-a-sermon-for-all-saints-sunday/ [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. Inspired by Rev. Nadia Bolz Weber http://www.patheos.com/blogs/nadiabolzweber/2014/11/some-modern-beatitudes-a-sermon-for-all-saints-sunday/ [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. http://www.patheos.com/blogs/nadiabolzweber/2014/11/some-modern-beatitudes-a-sermon-for-all-saints-sunday/ [↑](#footnote-ref-10)