

Collect: AMIGHTY GOD, you have knit together your elect in one communion and fellowship in the mystical body of your Son Christ our Lord: Give us grace so to follow your blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living, that we may come to those ineffable joys you have prepared for those who truly love you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, in glory everlasting. Amen.

Lessons: Revelation 7:9-12

Psalm 34:1-10, 22

1 John 3:1-3

Matthew 5:1-12

Sermon: The Gospel lesson for today is about the **Beatitudes or blessings**. This is also called **The Sermon on the Mount**. In this scripture Jesus is describing what is required to enter the Kingdom of Heaven or to be in God's presence.

As a rabbi (teacher) Jesus assumes the normal position for teaching. Jesus is seated on a small hill where he can be seen and heard by the crowd of followers gathered around him. He begins to tell them how blessed they are for they will become God's special people.

However, they will have to go through and endure some things. They will suffer. They might have to go through poverty, pain, sorrow, and even persecutions, but if they endure and not give up, they will know relief.

The focus is on commitment. One must take a stand, that he or she knows or thinks to be right and weather the storm that comes from others or situations that try to destroy you as you project and defend your position.

It will not be easy and you may pay a great price but the reward is to be in God's presence. Here on earth as you aspire to be a good Christian you can also become a saint. Through baptism, you renounce Satan, repent of your sins, and accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. It is then that God adopts us as his children and makes us members of Christ's body, the Church, and inheritors of the Kingdom of God.

Jesus points out how blessed it is to mourn for the person will be comforted. A person might have suffered a loss and be grieving. However, the grieving won't last forever, in time the pain will be less intense, occur less frequent and not last as long. There may be other activities or people that will add happiness to his or her life. Note that the comfort will come if the person doesn't give up or stop trying to move forward.

Jesus also said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit. For theirs is the kingdom of Heaven." I think this means a person knows or identifies a personal need. They might think there is something that is missing in their Christian life. As they seek to fill the hole/the void, they may begin to study, to become more active in the life of the Church, and they as they do these things, they will develop relationships that cause them to look beyond their deficiency and recognize their strengths.

As you read the blessings or Beatitudes you will recognize that as a child (saint, Christian) of God he will be your relief. He will take you from the darkness of despair to the happiness of sunshine. It becomes clear that all good things come from God.

In Revelation, the book that talks about the second coming of Christ and his victory over all evil forces, there is the promise that all God's people will be with him.

The scripture of the Revelation story starts out with: "There was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages standing before the Lamb (Christ)._____Then one of the elders asked, "Who are these, robed in white (purified, having been baptized and cleansed from their sins), where do they come from?" _____"These are they who come out of the great ordeal."

I would like to think this great ordeal is about, the evil, the persecutions and hardship of life (over coming Satan who represents all the evil forces in the world) and now at this final moment the suffering will have ended and God will wipe away all tears from every eye.

When you are going through things it is hard to think you are blessed and there are good things on the other side. Hardships are a part of life and how you handle them develops character and make you who you are.

As a Christian, let me remind you that you are never alone, you always have the presence of God with you. The Holy Spirit is God's presence in your life.

Blessed are those who seek God, He will find you!

This is All Saints Day, a time to remember those who have lived but have died. Some were known to and loved by us. Others were not known to us, some lived during our time and others lived and died before us. As saints they were baptized, loved God and their neighbors. On this day we remember them, and they will live on in hearts. Amen.

Rev. Lionel