

**Year C: All Saints Sunday-b Dan 7:1-3, 15-18; Ps. 149; Eph 1:11-23; Lk 6:20-31
St. Barnabas, Florissant – November 03, 2019**

Focus Sentence: Who are the saints?

Sermon

I offer these thoughts in the name of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit....

Good morning, Saints!! That seems to be an especially appropriate greeting this morning, as we commemorate the Feast of All Saints (which is actually celebrated on November 1, but which we observe today.) Because, after all, we are all saints, or at least we SHOULD be.

PAUSE

Our Old Testament reading this morning is from the Book of Daniel, and it recounts a vision that Daniel had of four giant beasts arising from the sea. Daniel himself states that this vision caused his spirit to be troubled within him, and that these visions terrified him. I don't know about you, but I'd probably also be terrified by such a strange vision, and you and I might wonder if maybe we ate too many spicy burritos the night before.

But, thankfully, Daniel closes this passage in a much less weird way, by telling us that the "holy ones of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom for ever – for ever and ever." And I'm pretty sure that we can accept that as one description of the saints: "the holy ones of the Most High." ... those who possess the kingdom.

PAUSE

Thanks, Daniel.....that's great, and we do appreciate your reassurance about receiving the kingdom.....but, we're still left with that old, nagging question: How do we know if we are "holy ones of the Most High"??...How do we know if we're really "saints"?

Well, to answer this question, it seems that it would be a good thing to look back at our Gospel reading for this morning from Luke. The reading we heard is what's frequently called "the Beatitudes." That name is just a fancy way of echoing the first word of each line, from the Latin text: *Blessed*, or in Latin, *BEATUS*, hence "Beatitudes".

Blessed, or "fortunate" or "happy" is the word used to describe a class of people Luke is discussing here, and "blessed" is certainly another way of saying, "holy" or "saint" (which, by the way, also comes from Latin, the Latin word *SANCTUS*, and which means "set apart" or "holy".)

PAUSE

Okay, then, with all that background information in hand, we could translate the beginnings of these lines from Luke's Gospel another way by saying, "You are saints, you who are poor" or "You are saints, you who are hungry now."

So, OK, problem solved. We have Jesus' commentary or description of sainthood. We can all rest easy now, because we now know what sainthood is all about, right?

Well, NO, because a careful reading of this passage from Luke might also come across as a bit *scary* when we take it seriously.

Why? Because Jesus seems to be saying that we are *blessed*, we are *fortunate*, we are *saints*, **when** we're poor, or **when** we're hungry, or **when** we weep, or even **when** we're hated, excluded, reviled, or defamed. And, sisters and brothers, I don't have to tell you that those are not generally considered to be good things.

And then, if that's not all bad enough, Jesus goes on to add the so-called "woes" to this list. As in: "Woe to you who are rich," and "woe to you who are full now," and "woe to you who are laughing now," and even "woe to you when all speak well of you." Seems to me that those **are** all good things. Because it also seems to me that most of us here this morning, even if we're not on the *Forbes' List of the Most Wealthy Americans*, well we're comfortable, we're probably pretty well-fed, and I'm fairly certain that most of do really appreciate it when people speak well of us. So how should we react to this list of Jesus'? Are we just not saints?

PAUSE

Well, Jesus really turns things upside-down here; that's for sure. In Jesus' time, and even sometimes in today's world, it was considered a sign of God's favor to be rich in material goods, and to be well-fed. If you were a good and righteous person, then it would be evident to others by your prosperity. But Jesus is telling us here that we've got it all wrong if we buy into that prosperity stuff. It sounds like Jesus is saying that we're actually in trouble if we're prosperous, and happy, and all that.

PAUSE

I think there are at least three important points to think about here. First of all, the Greek pronoun that Luke uses for “you” is plural; in other words, “you all.” So Jesus is saying through Luke: “Blessed are you all, the community, the gathered church, who are poor,” and so on. We are all meant to *share* in one another’s joys and misfortunes; and we’re to *help* one another.

Second, Jesus doesn’t intend for us to go out *seeking* to be poor, to be hungry, or to be hated or excluded. These are just things that might well happen to us just because we choose to follow Jesus. And so we should be glad that we are rejected by the world, the world that chooses to hate, or at least ignore, Jesus. If we are saints, then plan on a certain amount of bad things to come your way.

Finally, we do need to seriously examine ourselves and ask how we choose to SHARE with the poor, with the hungry, with those who mourn. Do we ignore them, or do we take to heart the promises we made in Baptism? ...particularly, that promise to “serve Christ in all persons” and the other one to “respect the dignity of every human being.” It might be good for us “wannabe” saints to revisit those promises we’ve made in Baptism. So let’s do it!

To close my sermon this morning, in place of the Nicene Creed we usually recite after the sermon, in a few minutes, I’m going to ask you to turn to page 304 in the *Book of Common Prayer* and join me in **re**committing to share with the poor and the hungry, in so in **re**committing to being saints.

Amen.