

Please pray with me. May the meditations of my heart and the words of my lips be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, and may you add a blessing to the hearing and understanding of this message today. Amen.

On All Saints Sunday, we call out the names of our beloved dead—those known to us who have died in the last year. It is a day of lament—a day to remember and to grieve those we have loved and lost. As we recognize those gone from us this year, we also remember all who have gone before us—our beloved dead—and the longer you live, of course, the more those losses accumulate. On All Saints Day we acknowledge also the deaths of those not known to us, especially those many thousands who have died as victims of injustice and violence around the world.

This is a solemn day of remembrance. Yet it is a celebration too, a day to thank God for the gift of those we have known and loved. It's a day to thank God for the life we have been given—a day to remember that all that we have is gift, ours to use only for a time.

For as we listen to these names, we are reminded that the day will come when our own names are called, and the bell will toll for us. All that we have, all that we are, is gift—ours only for a time. So, All Saints day is a time for reflection on how we are using the lives we have been given. When our own names are called, what will we leave behind?

All of our readings today, but particularly Daniel and the Sermon on the plain in Luke guide us in living today and what we leave behind.

In Daniel, like other apocalyptic literature,
the people are suffering persecution and the author is trying to help
them make sense of what they are living through.
With the use of fantastical beasts and imagery,
they are reminded that they have suffered before,
that God rescued them,
that God is with them in the suffering,
that God is faithful and will bring them through the current day.
We've been here before, Daniel says, and we'll get through this,
because God is faithful and powerful.
The kingdom of God will finally rule the peoples of all nations
and tongues when the messiah comes,
Daniel assures his listeners and us today.

From Daniel's perspective, history is God's project from beginning to end.
The kingdom of God comes in its own time.
The legacy we are asked to live is one that is
humble obedience to Jesus' way of life.
Today, this puts us in conflict with those in society who
deny the poor their share of the resources,
who deny the hungry food and assistance to get that food,
who deny the sick affordable health care,
who deny the immigrant refuge.
In these times, we are being asked to take a stand for or against Jesus.
This is the cross for us to take up today.

In his sermon on the Plain, Jesus is talking to his disciples.

²⁰ *Then Jesus 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. ²³ Rejoice on that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven, for that is how their ancestors treated the prophets.

I want to be clear:

In these times of vanishing resources for the poor and hungry, the day after SNAP benefits should have been disbursed but weren't, Jesus does not make a virtue of poverty.

There is no blessing in starvation.

What he means is that for all who become impoverished for the sake of following Jesus and living for God's reign, there are blessings that outweigh the woes of poverty.

Similarly, weeping induced by suffering for the sake of Jesus and the reign of God he proclaims will likewise be outshone by the joy of experiencing God's reign.

So too, all who prefer wealth, comfort and security over Jesus' invitation into the reign of God will someday understand the opportunity they threw away.

We will have good reason to weep and hunger for that precious lost chance.

The good news here is that persecution, failure and even death do not constitute the end of the game.

God promises to work redemption through what we perceive to be futile gestures of faithfulness in a wicked and ruthless world.

Lives spent struggling against starvation, poverty and injustice for Jesus' sake will not have been wasted.

The kingdom of God is coming.

God is bringing it as an act of sheer grace.

The challenge for us is to live now under God's reign.

This is the legacy that we are called to leave behind.

Lives spent struggling against starvation,

poverty and injustice for Jesus' sake will not be wasted.

The call to love enemies, throw blessings at curses and renounce violence and coercion form the radical core of discipleship.

The enemies Jesus calls us to love are not simply obnoxious neighbors, rude checkout clerks or inconsiderate drivers.

Enemies are people that hate us and would kill us if they could.

Jesus' enemies tortured him to death.

He died praying for their forgiveness-just as he teaches us to do here.

Never does Jesus act violently,

teach violence or condone violence under any circumstance.

Those who would call Jesus followers to violence are wrong.

This is perhaps the most counter cultural for us in our society today

He says, "love your enemies."

He most certainly does not say, "Like your enemies."

"Do good," Jesus commands. He doesn't say,

"think good thoughts or have good feelings,"

but actually, "do good to those who hate you."

Love them,

Do some good on them

Bless them

Pray for them

This is the central demand of Jesus' moral universe: *Love unreasonably.*

Let us strive to live this call and leave this legacy behind.

Thanks be to God.

Amen.