



## November 5, 2017 – Bless You

Given by Pastor Mattei

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. 2 Then 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. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Matthew 5)

Really, Jesus? What do you mean by declaring certain people “blessed”? Those you name are not blessed by the world by any measure. No, the world esteems ‘blessed’ the powerful, the affluent, those with connections in high places, those with means. Your values seem to be completely opposite to world’s values.

Are the people you name blessed “now” because one future day their fortunes will change? Are they to wait until the afterlife to receive respite, justice, recompense? Is this another way of offering a pie in the sky? Are those people “blessed” because they know something not everybody knows, like the bigger and final picture God will reveal at the end of times? What makes them (and us) blessed? Can anyone be blessed?

We recall and give thanks for those saints —family members, mentors and friends— who were gifts of God to us and who now worship before the throne. We give thanks also for those who, like Martin Luther King Jr., gave powerful public witness in working for justice for all people; for those who, like Mother Teresa, were living examples of caring for the least of these; for those who, like St. Francis, taught us about caring for the whole creation.

Saint-making, we know, is God's doing, not our own accomplishment. The word "saint" includes us and we know we aren't perfect.<sup>1</sup> As Martin Luther pointed out, we are simultaneously saints and sinners. All of us less-than-perfect people, living and dead, are part of the communion of saints. So the saints of God that we remember and give thanks for today include also the family member who always manages to rub us the wrong way, the high-maintenance friend who often seems to need more than we can give. It includes the people—ourselves also—who sometimes find it difficult to believe that God can possibly love those whose lifestyle or belief system differs from our own.

We are made saints and therefore "blessed" by God's grace; no exclusion: Christ died for all. The blessedness Jesus is talking about and lifting up is a blessedness not of things possessed or status achieved but of life experienced: awareness of and connection to the divine presence in us and around us makes us blessed. The poor in spirit (those who don't arrogantly and in self-centered ways think too much or only of themselves), the peacemakers (those who look for reconciling ways), those who hunger and thirst for justice and those who mourn are very much connected to life. Those who do not shy away from experiencing life in all its row-ness are not far away from divine Love, not far from the Kingdom.<sup>2</sup>

The Divine Energy or Spirit has sparked creation and is in all that there is.<sup>3</sup> That Life we are invited to tap into. May we all grow in discipleship and grace.

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 7:14-25; see also 1Corinthians 7:14

<sup>2</sup> Mark 12:34

<sup>3</sup> Genesis 1; 1 John 4:2; Romans 8:9.14; Colossians 3:11