

**All Saints Steenrijk Episcopal Church**

**Willemstad, Curacao**

**All Saints Sunday:**

**October 30, 2022**

**A Sermon by the Rev. Joseph Parrish**

**DRAFT**

**“Having blessedness”**

**The Holy Gospel: Luke 6:20-31**

Then Jesus looked up at his disciples and said: Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude

you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets. But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. Woe to you who are full now, for you will be hungry. Woe to you who are laughing now, for you will mourn and weep. Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets.

But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those

who abuse you. If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. Do to others as you would have them do to you.

May we who are little in the eyes of the world, Lord, grow into spiritual giants and saints because of your love for us. Amen.

One well known Christian spokesperson, Chuck Swindoll, said, “The longer I live, the more I realize the

impact of attitude on life. Attitude, to me, is more important than facts. It is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than successes, than what other people think or say or do. Attitude is more important than appearance, giftedness or skill. It will make or break a company, a church, a home. The remarkable thing is that we have a choice every day regarding the attitude we will embrace for the day. We cannot change our past. We cannot change the fact that people will act in a

certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have, and that is our attitude. I am convinced that life is ten percent what happens to me and ninety percent of how I react to it.”

A poem by William Longfellow entitled, “The Psalm of Life”, reads:

“In the world’s broad field of battle  
In the bivouac of life,  
Be not like dumb, driven cattle,  
Be a hero in your strife.

“Lives of great people remind us,

We can make our lives sublime,  
And departing, leave behind us,  
Footprints on the sands of time.

“Let us then be up and doing,  
With a heart for any fate,  
Still achieving, still pursuing,  
Learn to labor and to wait.”

[end of poem]

A bride and groom just married  
decided to make their special day such a  
one for others who rarely see such a  
happy event--those living in a local  
nursing home. Instead of going directly

to their wedding reception following their marriage, they went to visit the elderly residents, she walking in her bridal finery, he in his tuxedo; they promenaded up and down all the corridors of that nursing home, greeting the residents with the joy that was in their hearts, bringing a special peace to all who were there. People who may have been upset about their circumstances and their forgotten-ness came to the doorways of their rooms and smiled and greeted the newly married couple. Everyone was pleased. Their

lives were renewed by the presence of the youngsters who shared their special moment with others who may have had little more time to find joy and happiness. They gave what they had-- their attitude of gratitude for life and for each other and for all there.

Writer Warren Wiersbe said, “God doesn’t bless us to make us happy; God blesses us to make us a blessing.”

A number of years ago Orel Hirschheiser was pitching for the Los Angeles Dodgers. They had just won the World Series, and Orel had been named “The most valuable player of the series.” One of the television

shows about the World Series showed him in the dugout just before the ninth inning started. He was leaning against the wall and his lips were moving. It was obvious he was saying something to himself. So, later when he was a guest on one of the well know evening talk shows called “The Tonight Show,” the host of the show, Johnny Carson, asked him what he had been saying there in the dugout. “I wasn’t saying anything,” Orel responded. “Well, then, tell us what you were doing.” Finally, Orel replied, “I was singing.” “You were singing?” Johnny said. “I didn’t know you were a singer.” “Aw,” Orel said, “I’m not.” Johnny

persisted, “What were you singing? Sing it for us now.” “Nah, I don’t want to sing.”

But by that time the audience was chiming in with “C’mon, sing it, sing it to us!”

Finally, Orel Hirschheiser started to sing, “Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Praise God all creatures here below. Praise God above ye heavenly host. Praise God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.” And Johnny Carson was speechless. The whole audience was dead silent. Then one person started clapping, and soon the whole audience joined in applause.

That’s what happens sometimes when one is a saint of God, close to God. Others

aren't sure what to do. They don't know whether to clap or to ignore, or even to persecute. But the Spirit of God within us knows that once again our God has triumphed, that we will triumph with God, and that in the end, all will be given over to God's glory and grace.

Yesterday someone asked me how one could know if their religion was the right one or not. They are religious but not Christians. My thoughts were a bit jumbled at first, but somehow I came up with a reply: "Is our faith working for us? Does what we believe make us better or worse: do we act

more kindly or less. How does our faith work for us?”

Then I went on to say, if we have no faith, then why would we not just kill anyone we want? Why would we not act like animals against one another, and eat or be eaten? Where would we draw that line? Or are we just animals acting out our own particular desires at any given moment?

Do we have a sense of good and bad?

They responded that they heard heaven was supposed to be a wonderful place, one everyone wants to get to. And if so, why don't we quickly end our lives so we can get quickly to heaven?

That was a profound question. Why do we want to live?

To that I replied, sure it would be good to get to heaven, but getting there so quickly would be painful. So, the only reason we want stay alive is that to die is to experience pain, the most pain we could ever experience. We die when we are overwhelmed with pain.

Why do doctors want to heal their patients? Is it not to get rid of pain and suffering? Actually, no one wants to consider the pain we all will probably bear as we die. To die is to experience unimaginable pain. Sure, drugs might help

us mollify that pain, but we would have to go through a tremendous amount of soul searching just to plan our death. Some of course will do that, but they have reasoned that to stay alive is much more painful than dying. But the agony of deciding death for ourselves makes us less than animals of all other kinds, who continuously are trying to live. No animal seeks to end its life. But humans have some sort of ability to think themselves into death, an ability that no other animal has. We humans can somehow imagine our death so clearly, that to die seems better than to live, at least in our imaginations.

A Ukrainian medic who recently had been captured and put into a horrible prison cell and tortured was asked by her tormenters if she wouldn't rather die? But her resolve was to live unless her captors prevented her to live another day. In the end, her captors released her. They were possibly amazed that she had been able to go through such tremendous amount of torture that the tormenters themselves would never be able to withstand. In their minds, torture would be one way they would want to die; they had no prospect of being saved, no hope of salvation, no ability to see beyond the bounds of war, no trust in anything

divine, anything of God, anything that separated them from any other animal.

Torture was a way for them to try to force someone to kill themselves, then they would be victorious and not complicit in another person's death. It is a strange psychology, but it is the psychology of war in many minds. One will consume the lives of others just as a more powerful animal would consume a lesser animal. But the tormentors sense of humanity was only slightly better than any wild animal. Perhaps their psychosis was that that their friends would not kill them. But a weakened animal would just be left behind to become a stronger

animal's meal, or even become food for a lesser animal. Yet, even in the animal kingdom, herds protect their young and their vulnerable, even to their own detriment of possibly dying to save another. Humans who have no God will depend on their herd as their god. But are they simply ignoring their own fate in such a godless herd, ignoring that others will let them die or even kill them in order to stay alive themselves. Christians believe we have an imperishable soul, one which will live with Christ in eternity. And our ethics mean we will serve others even to the detriment of ourselves. But without a true God, who will be willing

to serve without remuneration, and even with punishment?

Today we honor those whose lives were given up for the sake of others; we call them saints, some with a capital S, Saints.

There is a simple song that says, “we want to be one like them, like those saints too.” But how far that takes us toward our own life’s end is how we measure saintliness. What are we willing to give up to be a saint?

So All Saint’s Day brings us directly into the discussion of the value of life? Is life sacred, or not? Is life God given or not? This debate rages now. The battle lines are

set. The stakes are high. But the end is whether we are going to war with evil, an unthinkable evil who sees lives as expendable?

Let us continue to pray for those who see life as less than sacred. And let us reexamine our own lives to see where we draw the line.

The life of a Saint is both simple and complex. Our decision will represent to the world whether we are grateful to God for life, or not. Our very lives hang in that balance. And our Redeemer, Jesus Christ, hopes we make the right decision.

May you find in your heart today the certainty of God's love for you. And may that certainty that you are God's beloved shine through you to others to give them a glimpse of the Kingdom of God that is already breaking into our world.

May God generously bless you today and for the rest of your life.

Amen.

“Having blessedness”

Description:

How far do we take our saintliness? Will we suffer for others? Will we give our lives for others? How far will we let our faith as Christians take us towards being a saint?

Tags: Jesus, God, Father, Son, Holy Ghost, thankfulness, war, tormentors, torture, life, death, animals, soul, heaven, faith, saints, Saints, medic, Ukrainian