

All Saints Day - 2020

Rev 7:2-4, 9-14; 1 Jn 3:1-3; Mt 5:1-12a

Today Jesus speaking very hopeful words, he speaks about a reality that is hard for us to see. We can get so focused on the things right around us we can forget that there are other realities, other promises, other outcomes to the situations of life. Jesus says that those who are mourning, those who are meek, the poor in spirit, those persecuted for the sake of righteousness - they can expect a consolation. He also speaks about those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, who are merciful, who are clean of heart, who are peacemakers, and he says that they will receive what they seek, and receive a great reward besides.

What is he taking about, how does it relate to us today? Right in front of our face at all times are the things we see and hear in this world, but Jesus is calling us to enter into another reality - the reality of his Kingdom. When we are connected to Jesus we can enter into a reality that is going on behind the world we see, and we can expect both a consolation for the difficult times, and a positive outcome for our goodness. Twice today Jesus speaks about the Kingdom of Heaven - what does he mean - well two things really, he is pointing to the glory of his reign in heaven, but also about a reality of his Kingdom here on earth. Participating in that Kingdom in the ways Jesus mentions helps us to see past the realities of this world and can help to support us as we go through the troubles of life. There is a whole other world beyond this one, and if we do not work to enter that kingdom while here on earth, we can be left out of the one that lasts for eternity. The goal of sainthood - which is possible for all - should be the ultimate goal of this life

Today All Saints Day. We remember those who have entered into the Kingdom of God in heaven. We remember the lives of many of these individuals, and have feast days for them, but it is not possible to do so for all of them - there are many who we are not aware of. Today is for all those who are unnamed, yet have followed Jesus and now share in the glory of heaven.

The first reading paints a picture of this heavenly world. We see a picture of a glorious celebration with God at the center, elders and four living creatures, angels, and also a vast multitude robed in white. These are the saints. Saints are human beings who are now in heaven, while angels are spiritual beings whom God created and who surround God in heaven and also touch our world. Humans don't become angles, yet we have the chance to be come saints. I say

“chance” because it is not a guarantee. There is a free gift of sainthood and heaven presented to us, but we must do our part to claim it. When the question is asked: *Who are these wearing white robes, and where did they come from?* the response is given: *These are the ones who have survived the time of great distress; they have washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb.* The voice does not say: “this is everyone who ever lived” - they had to do something. It’s not a ticket price to gain admission, it is a participation with Jesus in salvation.

So we might ask: “What do you have to do to wash your robe in the blood of the Lamb?” This is in part a reference to Baptism. In Baptism we are cleansed of all sin, and once we are that pure we can enter the Body of Christ. But in order to remain in that Body, and enter heaven as part of that Body, we have to keep that robe clean. Like the man who is sent out of the wedding feast because he does not have the proper garment, we cannot expect that we can simply ignore God’s instructions, not tend to that garment, and still be admitted. Once Baptized we must continue to work to be part of that Body. One way we do this is to act as Jesus did and move along with the Body. We move with Jesus when we hunger and thirst for righteousness and try to bring it about, when we are merciful, when we work to have true faith and hope and remain clean of heart, and when we are peacemakers. Also, we act like the Saints in the reading when we pray to God, when we worship God along with them as we are doing today. The more we enter the Kingdom here on Earth, the more we share now in the benefits that can be ours for eternity - the more that future spills into the present. We are consoled when we are mourning, we are lifted up when meek, we are filled when poor in spirit, we are protected when persecuted.

St Paul tells us today *Beloved, we are God’s children now; what we shall be has not yet been revealed.* It is in living like Jesus in this life that we remain pure enough to stay united to his body, and as part of that Body can enter into heaven in the next life. As Paul says: *Everyone who has this hope based on him makes himself pure, as he is pure.* This hope is what we celebrate today as we remember the many unnamed saints. It is a hope that if we remain pure in the Lord, if we continue to wash our robe in the Blood of the Lamb in celebrations of the Eucharist and in confession, if we live as and act as Jesus taught - then we become more like him, more a part of his Kingdom, and one day can share in that great celebration as one of those saints in heaven.