Season after
PENTECOST

Collect of the Day
Almighty and everlasting God, You knit together Your faithful people of all times and places into one holy communion, the mystical body of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Grant us so to follow Your blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living that, together with them, we may come to the unspeakable joys You have prepared for those who love You; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Scripture Readings
Psalm 149 (antiphon v. 4)
Revelation 7:(2-8) 9-17
1 John 3:1-13
Matthew 5:1-12

Hymns
Hymn of the Day – 677
Other Hymns –510 (FR), 411 (E), 725 (E), 932 (G), 672, 673, 675, 678

Prayers

Standing with the great multitude of saints before the throne of God and the Lamb, let us join in prayer, praise and thanksgiving to the God of our salvation.

Mighty and eternal God, we remember before You the saints and martyrs of every generation, who trusted in You in the face of terror and threat. Grant that when facing persecution and trial in our own day, we may be steadfast in faith. Deliver those whom You have washed in Baptism, granting the new life that death cannot overcome. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Mighty and eternal God, You established the Church and have granted her Your aid and protection through these many years. Continue to pour out upon us Your Spirit and grace, that we may accomplish Your bidding and proclaim Your saving name to every corner of the earth. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Mighty and eternal God, we give You thanks for the faithful pastors who have spoken to us Your Word and the church workers who have served us in Your name. Grant that we may continue to receive their ministry of Word and Sacrament with willing ears and open hearts. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Mighty and eternal God, we beg Your grace that our lives may be ordered by Your commands, and we ask You to bless those who govern us in Your name. Bless our king, prime minister, the parliament, our premier, and all local officials, that they may act with humility and honour for the good of all people. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Mighty and eternal God, we rejoice that You have rescued us from the power of death and raised us in Christ to dwell with Him in everlasting life. Give to those who grieve the comfort of the promise of the resurrection of the dead and eternal life, and bestow Your peace upon the dying, that they may fall asleep here and awaken in Your glory. Lord, in Your mercy**, hear our prayer.**

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Mighty and eternal God, You have made us Your children, and You continue to guard us as Your own possession. According to Your will, give healing to the sick, calm to the troubled in mind, and patience to those facing sorrow and struggle. Give health and peace to our nation. Hear us especially on behalf of _____. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Mighty and eternal God, bring us to that day when every tear shall be wiped from our eyes and we shall hunger and thirst no more. Knowing You now by faith, we yearn for the day when we shall know You face to face. Until the dawn of that eternal day, keep us in Your faith and fear through our Good Shepherd and Lord, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Season after PENTECOST SERMON

ALL SAINTS' DAY
(Series A)

Sermon Text: Matthew 5:1-12

"This is Us"

In the fall of 2016 television producer Dan Fogelman premiered a program that had the following premise: "A heartwarming and emotional story about a unique set of triplets, their parents, and their struggles." Hardly the description of a blockbuster! There are no great heroes, no one has superpowers, no one saves the world or governs a nation, no doctors in crowded emergency rooms, no terrorists, no gunfights, not much of anything, really. Just an ordinary family. But the portrayal of that family was so real and their struggles so relatable that within a few weeks, the show became one of the most popular programs on television. Millions of people began to watch the Pearson family in all their glory. At times the audience laughs, but most everyone has a box of tissues handy because they touch on things most of us have experienced or can easily relate to. Just a family being a family. As we watch, we can say, "This is us!"

One day 2,000 years ago a rabbi from the town of Nazareth climbed up a mountainside and sat down. This rabbi had spent time in the synagogues of Galilee preaching the Good News of the kingdom of God and healing people who had various diseases and casting demons out of those possessed. He had no form or beauty like a great King David and was accompanied only by a few fishermen he had recruited to be His disciples. He was not one of the great rabbis that people turned to for advice; and probably the vast majority of the people who came to hear Him teach were there simply out of curiosity.

As He went up the mountain, His disciples came to him, and He began to teach them, saying, *"Blessed …"* That was the first word out of His mouth . . . which would become one of the most famous sermons ever preached.

'Blessed.' It is hard to know exactly what Jesus' hearers thought of that first word, but they probably had all sorts of ideas pop into their heads. To be blessed means to have a lot of good happening in your life. Things like good health, a loving family, safety from danger, a fulfilling job, financial security, living in a strong and peaceful nation, and plenty of vacation time. If a person has those things, or even a few of them, they are blessed.

But that is not where Jesus goes. When He begins this sermon talking about being blessed, He lists off some things that do not seem like blessings—*"Blessed are the poor in spirit" . . . "Blessed are those who mourn" . . . "Blessed are the meek" . . . "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness."*

You can almost hear Jesus' first disciples wondering to themselves what it was they had signed up for. Whatever blessing there is in following Jesus was going to be different from anything they might have had in mind! What blessing is there in being poor in spirit, in mourning, in meekness, and in hungering and thirsting? In the world's way of looking at things none of this is very blessed. But Jesus does not come to live in the ways of the world. He comes to turn the world upside down.

In these first four beatitudes, He describes not some hypothetical future life; but life as it is really lived here in this world. This is us! We are the poor in spirit . . . we mourn our sins and our wretchedness . . . we have nothing to offer God, but can only come before Him in meekness. We hunger and thirst for righteousness. Jesus holds a mirror before us in these opening four statements; showing us how it really is with us. This is us! We are sinners, through and through; as Luther reminds us, "We are beggars. It is true!"

But Jesus never says something like this simply to drag us down. He reminds us of who we are so that He might show us who He is. He comes to the poor and the lowly to give great gifts. *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."* To those who must look to God for everything, He gives no less than the kingdom of heaven itself. He gives the reign of God, grace as wide as we need.

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." The Anointed Servant of God is sent to *"comfort all who mourn";* and Jesus is our comfort. Our sin is paid for, we are forgiven. And even though the wages of sin still plague us and death comes to us all; we are comforted, for *"the free gift of God is eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ,"* as St. Paul writes in Romans.

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." To the meek who cannot stand before God in their own righteousness He promises the earth. This earth that now creaks and groans under the weight of sin, that longs for the children of God to be revealed, will be restored and become, as St. Peter writes*, "a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness."*

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled." Jeremiah had foretold the coming of the descendant of David who would be *"The Lord our Righteousness."* And so, He fills us with His righteousness and satisfies us, becoming sin for us, as St. Paul puts it, *"so that we might be the righteousness of God."*

This is us! Sinners, but also saints at the same time. Sainthood, you see, is not something earned but is always a gift. The Lord who climbed the mountain to preach to His disciples is among those disciples as the great giver. He is not highlighting certain virtues and assigning rewards to those who achieve them, but is giving everything to those who have nothing. He is

pointing us to God's present work in our lives and to the sure and certain hope we have of eternal life.

And this Teacher, this Rabbi, who preached the Sermon on the Mount would in due time climb another mountain called Calvary in order to offer Himself as the sacrifice for our sins. He would take our wages upon Himself and three days later rise again to assure us of the victory.

This is us! Forgiven sinners, saints in Christ!

And that same Christ continues to work among us today. Just as the first four beatitudes are a group so also the second set of four are a unit. They describe how the grace we have received in Christ is lived out in our day-to-day lives. We who have experienced the mercy of Christ are made merciful. We forgive as we have been forgiven; we love as we have been loved. We can stand confident at the last judgement knowing that His mercy will cover all our sins. And in that same confidence now we don't need to worry about settling the score or living by the law of retaliation. We leave vengeance to God and live now in faith toward him and love toward one another.

"Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." This is us! The Son of God has shown us true obedience. He was tempted in every way as we are yet did not sin (Hebrews 4:15). We model that purity in our own lives showing single-minded devotion to everything that flows from the mouth of the Lord. We do this not to earn God's favour, but because we have seen the face of God in Christ our Lord and mirror him to the world around us.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God." This is us! Our Saviour is the Prince of Peace and the one who brings peace to the nations. We live in that peace and we spread that peace. We are no longer slaves to sin, having no permanent place in the family (John 8:34) for the Son of God has set us free and made us to be sons of God. We live out that freeing sonship knowing a son belongs to the family forever and lives in peace with his neighbour.

This is us! Saints whose salvation is lived out in our lives day by day. We walk a road different from the world around us and the world will hate us going against its grain. But even when the world fights back we need not fear. *"Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."* When we are insulted, when people falsely say all kinds of evil against us, when we are attacked, our reward is great in heaven and in that sure and certain hope we stand. Our Saviour bowed His meek head to mortal pain only to take up His power and reign (LSB 441) and that sets the pattern for all who follow Him. To the persecuted belongs the kingdom of God.

This is us! And this describes the people we remember today in our All Saints' Day service. We come before the Lord as "poor miserable sinners" poor in spirit, mourning our sin and all its consequences, especially death. We bring no good works that He should notice us but come in meekness and humility hungering and thirsting for righteousness. Our Savior meets us here in His word, at His table and takes us back again to the waters of our Baptism where He washed our sins away and made us to be His saints. We go from here, living as the saints He has called us to be.

Standing upon His promises we go to the world to bring mercy, to live in obedience, to make peace and to suffer all, even death, rather than fall away from our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.