

Transcript:

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.  
Blessed.

That's how God sees you.

That's how God sees your life in Christ Jesus.

You are blessed.

Is that how you see yourself?

Not a shallow blessedness in the things of this life,  
but a blessedness in every way that truly matters.

That is how God sees you.

Not a temporary blessing or one that could be taken from you,  
but blessed eternally.

Jesus himself calls you the blessed of his Father.

That's how God sees you.

That's how God sees your life in Christ Jesus.

Some of these Beatitudes, the blessed statements,  
describe how we are.

We are blessed.

That is we are saved.

We are happy before God and have bliss eternally.

We are poor in spirit.

That is to say we are repentant.

We recognize that in ourselves we are empty and poor  
and have nothing to offer God, but that we need to totally rely on  
him

as life so daily reminds us.

How about mourning?

Does that describe you especially on this All Saints remembrance  
as we remember those who have gone ahead of us?

Mourning and awaiting comfort.

The comfort of the resurrection and of seeing our loved ones again.

Others of these Beatitudes, well,  
it's hard to see how they describe me.

They are more a description of what we are becoming.

What God is at work in us to do and what we will be in the life to  
come

as the Apostle John said, what we are now, we don't see,  
but we will see it when we see him face to face.

Are you meek?

Are you merciful?

Are you pure in heart?

Are you peacemaking?

Let's just take those last two for a second here.

It is a challenge, is it not, to be pure in heart, in an age of  
impurity.

And in an age which has made impurity all the more accessible through  
electronics.

We speak, of course, of immoral websites, depicting men and women  
and doing unmentionable things through texting now.

Even our children are solicited to engage in activities that break the six commandments.

We are defiled by these things, and not just individually, but I mean as a people, as a whole in general, we are defiled.

As anyone can see from just a simple fact that in society, in general,

and for the most part, women and girls do not dress as modestly as they used to,

nor in general, and for the most part, are men and boys as respectful to them,

as they once were.

But this is not what you are called to be, and it is not who you are.

Jesus says, "You are blessed."

And that God is at work in you to make you pure in heart as David.

Cried out after being defiled in adultery, create in me God a pure and clean heart.

Peace making.

Well, that's a challenge in a digital age too.

We all need to watch what we say, and we all need a lot of help in this regard.

We say things we shouldn't.

We gossip, we lie, we boast, we exaggerate and spin the truth, tweak it,

leaving out crucial facts, always trying to make ourselves look better.

If I could borrow a line from St. James, with the same Twitter account,

we bless God and curse our neighbor made in his image.

Here too, the Internet is full of temptation.

It's just way too easy to write something or click something or type something

about someone that you would never say to their face.

Resolving conflict and conflicted issues happens best face to face, maybe even only face to face.

Meeting face to face a person you can show the other person in your face,

the face and love of Christ, and they can do the same for you.

They say that most communication is nonverbal anyway, and I think that's true,

which means that we hear as much, if not more, with our eyes than we do with our ears.

You've got to go to the person face to face.

When I look at my own life, the attitudes don't describe me very well.

How merciful have I been, even with the people I love?

Have I always sought peace? Have I been pure in heart?

I'm just, I'm not like that, but I see in Jesus one who is.

And he is in me and he is in you and he is at work in you.

You see, ultimately the beatitudes describe Jesus and his work in you.

Not us, but him.

And that is the great comfort of this day and the whole occasion for this day,

that we will not be as we are now. You aren't stuck.

This isn't it. Christ is at work in you and the proof is everyone who has come before you.

Today's saints triumphant in heaven were yesterday's saints militant here on earth.

And that is why today we thank God for the gift of that faithful crowd of witnesses

that cheers us on as we march toward heaven.

Christianity is a team sport. It's not golf.

It's an orchestra. It's not a solo competition.

When the Holy Spirit calls us to faith and brings us to Jesus, he then places us in a community of believers in Jesus that we call the one Holy Christian

and apostolic church. And why does he do that?

Why does he connect us to the body? Because there has never been a time

when keeping the faith has been easy. Because lambs need the protection of the flock.

Because the devil always attacks faith.

As Christ says, temptations to sin and fall away from faith must come.

It's discouraged. The devil wants to discourage your faith.

And he does it by sins inside the church and sins outside the church.

Let's look at sins in the church.

The church is a community of believers, but community, like family, is not always easy.

It's not something you can control with an app.

You know what, with an app you just sort of, oh, I don't like that.

You just swipe stuff away. You don't like. You're not interested in it.

Well, when you come to church, you can't do that. You can't just swipe away people and things that you don't like.

We are encouraged by one another's faith.

I am so encouraged by you when you sing. Your pastor needs you to sing.

Because that's like my sermon. I already know what this sermon says.

I need to hear the encouragement I receive from you.

But we also, let's be honest, are sometimes discouraged by one another's sins.

We see those two. It's easy to despair over the failures of sins that we see inside the church, in her preachers and in her people.

But the Gospel of Jesus Christ has the perfect solution to this.

We shouldn't be shocked to discover that the church is composed of sinners who have real sins and a real need for Christ's forgiveness.

We don't have to self-justify. We don't have to pretend like nothing has ever or could ever go wrong or is going wrong.

We don't have to hide our sins. We don't have to get even.

We don't have to preserve the institution. We repent and believe the good news that Jesus died and bled for us.

And we use that to help each other do better.

Because how does Jesus see us? Blessed.

That's how he sees us. Saints. By his blood.

We already knew that we were poor in spirit and needed to lean on Christ for everything.

And that's why we invite others to come in and do the same.

And then there are the sins out in the world that come into the church or put pressure on the church.

As Jesus mentioned, "Blessed are you when you are reviled and persecuted."

And people say false things about you like your big hits on my account.

The world does not make life in the church any easier.

This should not surprise us though. The saints who went before us fought to pass down what we have received and they had to fight to.

Should we have to fight any less than they? They believe that Christ lives and reigns and is coming soon.

Should we believe that any less? They also had to fight and were weak and cried out to the Lord for help.

Every age has its battles. There's no golden age where everything in the church was perfect.

The early church faced lions and martyrdom. We faced the rainbow mafia and its relentless pressure to bow down at worship it.

Why do I even have to preach about this?

Why do I even have to talk to my children about God's rainbow, which is a sign of his love and faithfulness?

And how some people are using that to stand against God and his ways. Why do I have to do this? Why do you?

Because as the apostle teaches us, if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare for battle?

Blow the trumpet. Prepare for battle.

This is a religious and spiritual war. It's a war of religions. It's not a political divide. It's a religious divide.

They want you to stop thinking and speaking in certain ways and start believing differently.

Like a slow boil, you see it bubble up more and more and we ought to recognize the sort of patterns that we see.

For example, the pattern of peer pressure on children to get on the right side has rainbow religion is normalized in our sight

by everything from social media to beer cans to flags flown in their schools and in their friends' homes and little badges and buttons.

The parents then are pressured to cave, not wanting to lose their children, grandparents too, or to stand up to them in love for the sake of a fake peace that is no peace.

We are called to be peacemakers and to live as far as we can at peace with all, but we are not to make peace with evil.

We are not called to make peace with the devil.

Some of those parents then leave the church or turn on their

congregations inwardly.

And so the mafia, the rainbow mafia is convinced. This is what they think about you.

They are convinced that it is just a matter of time before a conservative Bible believing Christians like you will give up and bow down before the rainbow flag.

They are convinced of this.

But Daniel did not serve false gods in Babylon, and we will not serve false gods.

Love is not love.

God is love.

God make us unafraid of those lions.

Rise again, the lion-hearted saints of early Christendom.

God grant us their courage.

God grant us the courage of Saint Pauli Karp.

He was a congregational member of Saint John, the apostle, very early church.

He became a pastor.

And when they threw him into the arena, they said, "Deny Jesus, or else we have got lions and beasts."

And you know what he said?

He said, "Well, you better go get him, because how could I deny my king?"

God grant us the courage of Saint Lawrence.

They hauled him up naked on a hot barbecue, men-sized barbecue, and they threw him on the coals.

And they said, "Deny Jesus, and we'll get you down."

And he said, "Well, you better turn me over. I'm not done on the other side."

God grants us the courage of those Lutheran princes at Augsburg in 1530 who bowed their head before the emperor

and said, "You might as well just cut off our heads now, because we'd rather that than deny our faith in the pure gospel of Jesus Christ."

God grants us the courage even of our own parents and grandparents who sat in pews like these to hand down the faith to us.

It's easy to grow discouraged, to think that the fight can't be won.

And especially when we look at ourselves and how prone we are to weakness.

But those who have gone ahead of us, these saints and any other you can think of, they're the same as us.

They had the same baptism, the same Lord, the same faith, the same scriptures.

God was faithful to them, and he will certainly be faithful to you.

Paul Saints Day teaches us not to judge things by how they are going right now, but by how they shall be at the end of days.

Today is largely an exercise in rejoicing in what we aren't right now, but will surely be by God's grace and mercy in heaven.

And why not rejoice?

And why not be happy for all those who have gone ahead of us?

Paul, now they are perfect in heaven, and they were just as imperfect

as we are here.

God could save them, he could certainly save us.

The reward they have shall be ours, because their Savior is also ours and he gives like grace.

Now we mourn and are blessed, then we shall be comforted.

Now we are being made meek and counted as nothing in the eyes of the world, but then we shall inherit the earth.

Do you hear them cheering you on, this faithful cloud of witnesses?

Do you hear what they're saying?

Don't give up.

Don't despair.

Be lionhearted.

Jesus lives.

Jesus reigns.

Jesus wins.

Come soon, Lord Jesus.

Amen.

The peace of God which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Amen.