

All Saints C 2025 Luke 6:20-31

When I first thought of asking Adam to play *Of the Land and Seasons* today, I was thinking of autumn, and how we skipped at least one season, and how nice it would be for us to sing the liturgy with his piano skills instead of with me multi-tasking on the guitar. However, I was not thinking that this was All Saints Sunday. I'm not sure how I missed that, because All Saints is always celebrated on the first Sunday of November. I briefly considered whether we should pick another liturgy—maybe a more formal, “higher” setting like we tend to use for Easter or other festival days—but then I decided that it really is fitting for All Saints Day to sing this liturgy that is based on something as elemental and ordinary as the seasons that flow one to another, year after year. Because when we celebrate All Saints Day, when we read about saints in scripture, and most of the time when we talk about saints in the church, at least in our tradition, we are not referring to those all-star, famous saints: Saint Matthew or Saint Peter, Saint Francis or Saint Patrick. We are talking about ordinary people of God whose lives are comprised of seasons of confidence and seasons of doubt, seasons of faithfulness and seasons of sin. We're talking about all of us, recognizing that we all are saints, and sinners, both at the same time. How different from this world that insists on dividing us into good people and bad people, alienating, fearing, labeling, blaming.

Now, at first glance, Luke's beatitudes seem to divide up people as well: those who are blessed and those who better watch out. But a close look at Jesus' bizarre list of who is blessed reveals conditions to which we couldn't aspire even if we wanted to—and none of us would want to; people don't choose to be poor or hungry or bereaved, or hated, or defamed, or excluded. These are realities that happen *to* people, and Jesus says, woe to us if we enjoy our blessings while leaving others in those miserable conditions, not helping the poor, or feeding the

hungry, or comforting the mourning, or loving the excluded. To be a saint means to be set apart for a holy purpose, but that purpose is not personal salvation or sanctification; it's blessing others when they need it until there is no division—them and us—but communion—all of us, together.

If we love our enemies, they won't be enemies for very long; it's hard for someone to hate us if we keep doing good to them; people are going to sound pretty silly cursing us if we are blessing them. Doing to others as we would have them do to us—or do to those we love—is the universal rule of human community. Every religion has a version of the Golden Rule. We may hyperbolically call people who follow it and follow it well *saints*, because it's not easy to love those who aren't very loving back; but it is the work that all of us are called to do when we are baptized into Christ, because it follows Christ's example. The lectionary cut off the beginning of this scene, but one of the details that makes this passage different from Matthew's sermon on the mount is the location: Luke gives the stage direction that Jesus *came down with them and stood on a level place with the great multitude*. Jesus was not high above the crowds; he was down with them, sharing their experience, blessing them in the midst of their troubles. So that's where we're called to go, too.

Think of the world's great cathedrals where you have to look up to see the statues of the famous saints on the facade above the entrance or immortalized in the stained glass. But no saint ever got up there without a lifetime of getting down in the depths of human suffering, serving others like Jesus did. And the saints that we remember today, the regular saints, the ordinary saints, the everyday saints, we remember not because of their miraculous abilities or astounding theology or perfect piety but because they spent their lives blessing us in small—and maybe sometimes in bigger—ways, right here in this life that we all share. May we, who are still sinners, but who are also already saints, go and do likewise.