

The Feast of All Saints, Year C  
November 2, 2019  
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Today's Gospel from Luke is a revelation about how the world really works, a presentation of the ethics that this new community of his will have to adopt. In Matthew's Gospel, there is a much more elaborate sermon, and as you likely know, it takes place on a Mount, it is the Sermon on the Mount, coming from on high – wisdom flowing down from the heights — a place of revelation and transcendence, and it is given to a multitude who have gathered to quench their curiosity about this man? this healer? this prophet? this holy man?

Luke, on the other hand, has the sermon given on a plain or level place rather than a place of revelation. Not from on high, as lofty principles, but directly to those are gathered. Eye to eye as it were. He is among people who are believers — who have signed on as those faithful to his ways. Now he is talking to his followers, to his intimate disciples and to his larger congregation of followers who have gathered from far and wide.

So the goals of these two sermons are different from one another.

And perhaps they are a cautionary note to we who preach — that the same sermon is not meant for every situation. Repeating a sermon may not hit it out of the park every time. Situations are different, the interpretation needs to be fresh.

Jesus knew that.

Eugene Peterson wrote *The Message*, a well-known paraphrase of Holy Scripture. In seminary we are taught not to use this to read the Bible. It is not true enough to the exact wording.

So, I'm going to read it to you! This is today's gospel as interpreted by Peterson:

### **St. Luke's Beatitudes from *The Message***

Coming down off the mountain with them, he stood on a plain surrounded by disciples, and was soon joined by a huge congregation from all over Judea and Jerusalem, even from the seaside towns of Tyre and Sidon. They had come both to hear him and to be cured of their ailments. Those disturbed by evil spirits were healed. Everyone was trying to touch him — so much energy surging from him, so many people healed!

Then he spoke:

*You're blessed when you've lost it all.  
God's kingdom is there for the finding.*

*You're blessed when you're ravenously hungry.  
Then you're ready for the Messianic meal.  
You're blessed when the tears flow freely.  
Joy comes with the morning.*

*Count yourself blessed every time someone cuts you down or throws you out, every time someone smears or blackens your name to discredit me. What it means is that the truth is too close for comfort and that that person is uncomfortable. You can be glad when that happens—skip like a lamb, if you like! — for even though they don't like it, I do . . . and all heaven applauds. And know that you are in good company; my preachers and witnesses have always been treated like this.*

*But it's trouble ahead if you think you have it made.  
What you have is all you'll ever get.  
And it's trouble ahead if you're satisfied with yourself.  
Your self will not satisfy you for long.*

*And it's trouble ahead if you think life's all fun and games.  
There's suffering to be met, and you're going to meet it.*

*There's trouble ahead when you live only for the approval of others, saying what flatters them, doing what indulges them. Popularity contests are not truth contests—look how many scoundrel preachers were approved by your ancestors! Your task is to be true, not popular.*

*To you who are ready for the truth, I say this: Love your enemies. Let them bring out the best in you, not the worst. When someone gives you a hard time, respond with the energies of prayer for that person. If someone slaps you in the face, stand there and take it. If someone grabs your shirt, gift wrap your best coat and make a present of it. If someone takes unfair advantage of you, use the occasion to practice the servant life. No more tit-for-tat stuff. Live generously.*

*“Here is a simple rule of thumb for behavior: Ask yourself what you want people to do for you; then grab the initiative and do it for them! If you only love the lovable, do you expect a pat on the back? Run-of-the-mill sinners do that. If you only help those who help you, do you expect a medal? Garden-variety sinners do that.*

*If you only give for what you hope to get out of it, do you think that's charity? The stingiest of pawnbrokers does that.*

I think that the words of *The Message* lay down the call we are given quite clearly. You and I are called to a way of living that will not always bring us comfort. Will not always strike us as just — because we do seek tit for tat as justice, don't we? Oh, how nice it would be to get even. But it's not so for God.

Holy living is an outpouring of love when love is not known, of generosity where generosity has not been received, of kindness when kindness has not been shown. There is a very romantic moment in the Masterpiece TV series about Queen Victoria. This is sort of a “chick flick” but bear with me. Victoria is proposing to Albert, having realized that she must lead the way, she ranks above him, he dare not make that move first. She is all nerves and jitters. Albert challenges her when she says she wants to ask him a question, but only if his answer will be yes”. He challenges her in return: He will answer, but only if she will kiss him first. And so she asks, “Albert, will you marry me?” Albert makes his intention clear to her: “For me, he says, This is not a marriage of convenience.”

Victoria’s response is one that every committed couple, married or not, will understand. She says: “No. I think this will be a marriage of *inconvenience*.” Framing his face with her hands, she finishes with, “But I have no choice.”

And so it is with the life dedicated to Christ and Christian principles. Our actions of love and generosity and kindness may cause us great inconvenience, even grief. However, when we follow the Lord with all our hearts and bodies and minds, really — we have no choice. This is the right way to behave, these are the right things to do.

And again, we know in our hearts that we really have no choice. Amen.