

***“All the Saints: Their Gifts, Our Grief & Gratitude”***

Matthew 5:1-11

Message for: October 30, 2022 - All Saints Day

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Today's reading from the Gospel of Matthew comes from what is known as *The Sermon on the Mount* – the blessings/the beatitudes that Jesus spoke in front of a huge crowd of people gathered to hear his teachings. The beatitudes describe what a healed, whole, liberated life looks like. Contrary to what we witness in our political leaders and what most of us pursue in our society, Jesus is describing a life of humility and mercy and peace.

As we gathered this morning, I mentioned the overlap of holidays at this point of the year. Ancient Celtic peoples celebrated at this point in the year, on November 1st and 2<sup>nd</sup>, marking the time when the other world and this world came together; where the visible and invisible world meet. The church built on these ancient Pagan traditions, celebrating on November 1<sup>st</sup> the feast of All Saints and then November 2<sup>nd</sup> the feast of All Souls or Día de los Muertos - the Day of the Dead.

Just as we hear Jesus speaking to the crowds in today's Bible wisdom teaching, the apostle Paul writes many letters to the Christian communities that he is building and supporting. In his letter to the Romans, he says, “But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints.” when he talks about Saints, it is the word for all of us - the people - the people are the Saints. It doesn't mean those who were better than others. Certainly, we need heroes, mentors, examples to look up to, but we see throughout the Bible so many examples of the crowds, of the people, that make up communities and are called to follow the path of love and to live the teachings of the Christ.

When we think about saints, we tend to imagine people who are separate from the rest of us. Those who are capable of going above and beyond. People who have achieved perfection. Actually, saints are people who are striving to live into the blessings that Jesus names in Matthew's gospel.

The word “sana,” or “sano,” in both Latin and Spanish, is the root word for healthy, or healed, cure, remedy - to make sound or to repair. To be healed does not mean to be perfect. It means you were once wounded, and you walked through it and came out the other side more alive and more whole.

The Christian journey isn't about being perfect - it's about becoming whole - which means we bring our wounds for healing. We all are wounded in life. The word, "saint," comes from the root, "sana" or "sano," - those who were healed - those who were wounded, but moved through pain, anger, negativity, cynicism, resentment. We fall into those feelings of despair so easily. Such feelings naturally rise up in us when we've lost something or someone precious, or we're dealing with chronic illness or pain or facing a poor prognosis. Maybe you took a leap of faith and the result was an epic failure! But if we hold on to that pain, if we withdraw to lick our wounds, or let those wounds fester, we are giving up in the middle of the journey. We are thwarting the potential for healing. We are sabotaging the possibility and the path toward wholeness.

Unless we bring those wounds for healing, unless we move through the pain and seek the path of wholeness, it isn't possible to be a saint – a whole person who is living into the blessings that Jesus is preaching and teaching, in which we strive to do what God desires.

On this day of celebration we are reminded that we are one of the crowd – each of us is part of the great group united with God who is little by little healing our woundedness. It is a waste of time to deny our woundedness – we can't bring it forward for healing if we don't see it and acknowledge it. It's simple, it's straightforward, but it's not easy!

Our gathered beloved community is filled with saints, and we're in the middle of that path of healing and wholeness – we don't *start* there – we move with intention *toward* getting there together. Amen.

As we enter a time for contemplation, I invite you to consider these reflection questions:

- *Who are the saints in your life?*
- *What might you say to them today?*
- *What have you learned from them & inspires gratitude in you?*
- *How might you be a saint in someone else's life?*