

**All Saints Sunday**  
**Peace Lutheran Church – Austin, Texas**

**GOSPEL**

**Matthew 5:1-12**

The holy gospel according to Saint Matthew, the fifth chapter.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

<sup>1</sup>When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. <sup>2</sup>Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

<sup>3</sup>“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>4</sup>“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

<sup>5</sup>“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

<sup>6</sup>“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

<sup>7</sup>“Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

<sup>8</sup>“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

<sup>9</sup>“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

<sup>10</sup>“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>11</sup>“Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. <sup>12</sup>Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

The gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

On this All Saints Sunday, I want to ask you a question about your deepest memories of love and connection...

What I wonder is...what does your deepest memory of love and connection...taste like?

Mine tastes like many things...McDonald’s orange drink and Kraft macaroni and cheese, if I’m honest...and also, chicken cooked in cream of mushroom

soup and sour cream...with dried roast beef on rice. "Company Chicken" ...is how the label of the faded card reads that lives in my mother's recipe box. I don't ever remember eating it with company though. Just as a family around an oak dinner table.

And I was well into my twenties before it even occurred to me to ask for my mother to share the sacred knowledge of that notecard, that familiar and comforting food...even though it probably originated in a women's magazine...or even a newspaper advertisement.

Perhaps many of us have cream-of-mushroom-soup-related memories...or maybe the taste-bud echoes of abuela's menudo or mole...

Families, cultures...people across time and space...are connected through meals...shared tables...

Today we remember the saints who have joined the Lamb's High Feast...long ago...or not so long...often too soon...at least for us who still wait to join that feast.

We spoke about saints at the women's Bible study this month...what it means to be a saint...and to be called a saint. There are those who are granted sainthood as a title...not so much by children of the Reformation. But often, even Lutherans agree to use Saint as a title for those granted that official status by the Roman or Orthodox traditions...even though, in our broader understanding of sainthood, we know we are all saints. So we speak of Saints Peter and Paul...even Ambrose and Augustine...or Ignatius or Francis...But we could just as easily speak of Saint Miriam, Saint Jo, Saint Eileen...and so many others...all those named in the book we will read from as we pray today...

Perhaps, that would be an interesting practice to adopt...in place of any other honorific, what if we addressed each other as Saint? No Pastor, Doctor, Private, Officer, Colonel, or Professor...just Saint...

We hold, with Saint Martin Luther...that the saints are those whose lives are hidden within God's heart and Christ's redemption...(Colossians 3:3).

There have been and continue to be traditions where the saints who have died are ones who are offered prayers...asked to intercede for us still on earth with Christ. Some teachings say that this is because those saints have amassed so much credit with God through their goodness that they can spend some of it on us poor sinners who aren't good enough on our own. As children of the Reformation, we reject this, of course. No one is good enough to bridge the gap between human failing and God's perfection...only God's reaching out to us...drawing near to us...again and again and again...bridges that great divide.

But, I was told that a previous pastor here explained prayer to the saints another way...saying that we might think of speaking with the saints in the same way we think of asking our friends on earth to share in our prayers. We wouldn't hesitate to reach out to them to ask for prayer? Why all of a sudden hesitate to ask when they no longer share earthly life with us?

One of the most honest prayers I ever prayed wasn't to God. It was to my grandfather...my Opa...just after I received the news he had died. And in those hours, I wept...and I told him I loved him...and I kind of gave him a piece of my mind, to be honest. There were a lot of things that were unresolved in our relationship in this life that I needed to tell him about, even once he was gone. And I still carry him and his ministry with me. (He's the only other pastor I know of in our family in recent history.) I was honored to receive his traveling communion set when he died. Some of you may have seen it, if we've shared communion away from this place. It's old and a bit unwieldy...but it is a connection to the saints beyond my sight and my life, and it means so much to share that with others.

And of course, whatever tastes connect us to our ancestors, the taste of that meal...the food and drink that connect us all across the generations...is perhaps the most powerful of all.

It has been true that people have invoked the names of the saints to ask for prayers on their behalf. But there is another side to that coin. When we invoke our ancestors in faith, I think we also invoke their witness to our lives.

When I think of my ancestors, I hope they will pray for me...but I also imagine they might have as many words for me as I had for my Opa from the opposite side of earthly life.

And maybe that is good. Maybe we can call upon our ancestors for their support...and also for accountability...because the work of the kingdom didn't start in our lifetime and it won't end in our lifetime...and I wonder how I might choose to live if I kept at the forefront of my mind the knowledge that God and everybody...including my ancestors are watching...

Our lives are all hidden in Christ. That is sure. But our work is laid out in the stark light of our earthly days. Someday we will come to a banquet feast that has no end...and until that day, we can work to see that more of our fellow precious children of God are fed.

And when we need to remember who we are...when we need to be remembered...to be knit again into the body that connects us to our ancestors and our descendants and all the children of earth...we are brought here again to taste God's own presence with us. We hold out our hands and receive the meal that hides us in God's heart...with all the saints across time and space...and we taste who we are.

Taste and see...that God is good...that you are counted among the saints...and that the past, present, and future are all gathered here today...an impossible multitude...infinity breaking into time and space.

Taste and see eternity. Broken for you...and for all.

Thanks be to God. Amen.