

November 2 2014

**Scripture Lessons ~**

*Psalm 107:1-9*

*Revelation 7:9-17*

*Matthew 5:1-12*

**Sermon**     *Blessed By God*

I am tired. I am so tired. Yes, I am tired because for several years I have been blaming it on middle age, iron poor blood, lack of vitamins, air pollution, water pollution, dieting, obesity and a dozen other maladies and it makes you wonder whether life is really worth living but now I find out it is not that at all. I'm tired because I'm over worked. It is a little out date but the population of this country is two hundred million, eighty-four million are retired leaving a hundred and sixteen million to do the work; seventy-five million are in schools some place that is leaving forty-one million to do the work; twenty-two million are employed by the government so that leaves nineteen million to do the work; four million are in the armed forces leaving fifteen million to do the work; take from that total fourteen million and eight hundred thousand people who work for the state and city government and that leaves two hundred thousand to do the work. Of course there are a hundred eighty-eight thousand sick people in hospitals and that leaves twelve thousand to do the work; eleven thousand and nine hundred ninety eight people I counted them, in prisons that leaves just two people to do the work and it's just you and me. And you are lolly-gagging around so it is just leaving me to do the work. No wonder I am tired. I'm so tired A little out dated statically but I don't know how many times I read that and gotten a chuckle out of it.

You know there are lots of days when I feel like that poor guy in his boxer shorts on that street like the weight of the whole world was placed directly on these two shoulders. You can ask my massage therapist if you question that. If I think if we were all honest there are often times maybe more than we like to admit, maybe very recently, even right now today when we feel very tired the way the world seems to be treating us and we just like to hide so nothing else happens. We want to keep a low profile and live below the radar and be safe. Maybe you feel this way on a daily basis because your health isn't what it ought to be or you are dissatisfied with your boss or with your job or maybe you work for the government with all kinds of red tape or you work in an office with a never ending routine that is sort of dragging you down. Maybe you're a business person and you are just tired of things being slow or maybe you tired of all the troubles that you hear about in the world, the stock market goes up and goes down. My brother in law watches it every day as he is getting ready to retire Tried of the violence in our country and

the violence and warfare in other countries, famine and poverty and of course Ebola right now. Maybe your personal world is in an up roar or maybe you're plagued with a relational problem right now or you and your children are not getting along or maybe you were a victim of abuse at some point in your life. Whatever is making you tired today and has made you tired in the past, I know, I have included anybody or just about everybody who is a human being in this description because whether you are rich or whether you are poor or whether you come from a stable family or not whether you are person of faith or a person search for faith, you know at times the world is down right out to get us and we shouldn't have bothered to get out of bed that morning. Whether we want to or not in order to deal with those problem we have got to get out of bed because the reality of life is that our problems are not going to go away all by themselves because if you are a parent there is always little kid crying and your spouse or partner needs to have dinner when they get home from work and there is always the boss wants more out of you than you feel like maybe that you can give. There is a lot more that needs a hug or there is some guy or gal who in all the audacity wants you to pay their bills on time and then you ask yourself if being a person of faith or following Jesus really matters when the world is the way it is.

Maybe a better question to ask is on this All Saints Sunday is this, what good is it to be a saint of God. What does it mean to be blessed by God when we look at those Beatitudes and God seems to us to be very far away? You know I have tried many to deal with it myself in Bible Study and sermon. I can never completely answer the question that we all have about why people go through such things because only God ultimately knows why good people must sometimes deal with these harsh realities of life. But there is one thing that I do know. I do know for sure that Jesus' words of comfort in the Beatitudes in Matthew's gospel which we read today, can give us a totally different perspective and can give us a whole lot of comfort when life doesn't seem to be going our way at all.

And one of the first things, I think, this passage does is mash to pieces a myth, a myth that we all learn from the time when we were children that the only sign of God's favor. The only sign of God's blessing in this life is to be wealthy or to be completely healthy or to be completely prosperous; this myth continues to circulate in churches and on TV sets throughout our country and around the world. But as I have grown older and hopefully wiser and read the scriptures a lot more carefully I have also come to realize sometimes the very opposite is true, that sometimes when we are at our very lowest point that is when God blesses us the most with intangible things, with love, with God's presence, with God's blessing of love and support from all those people around us who care about us very much. And ultimately with the strength and material things however small that they might be, that we truly need to get through that next day. I guess this point came to me

very clearly as I have spoken over the years with parents and grandparents and older folks that I have encounter and as a child with big ears listened to those stories from the past about times like the Great Depression which was one of the most devastating times of many people's lives. People were depressed they tell me, they were dirt poor; they struggled daily to make ends meet. It was definitely not a time we would ever associate with God's blessing and yet many of those same people tell me that those years were amongst the richest and happiest years of their lives because at no other times in their lives did they feel that God was with them in a special way in that difficult time of need.

So I am going to invite you then to do a little exercise with me I am going to invite you to close your eyes for just a few moments and focus your thoughts on these Beatitudes that have been shared with us. I'm going to paraphrase them a little bit. What I want you to do is picture yourself in your mind's eye on one of the greatest times of need you ever experienced and then I want you to picture how God's blessings were present in those times of need. I want you to hear Jesus not me in speaking these words as I speak them to you. So close your eyes and focus if you will.

Blessed by God when you were truly in need of God's help whatever the situation.

Blessed by God when you were mourning a loss in the midst of your life.

Blessed by God when you lacked self confidence; when you lacked self esteem and when you were just plain shy.

Blessed by God when you tried to do the right thing even when that right thing failed.

Blessed by God when you forgave someone even when that someone didn't forgive you.

Blessed by God when your motives were good even when things didn't work out your way.

Blessed by God when you tried to resolve trouble instead of causing trouble even if you got caught in the middle and were blamed falsely.

Blessed by God when you tried to live the best Christian life that you could and you got the short end of the stick anyway.

Rejoice be glad for your reward is great in heaven because people so persecuted the prophets who were before you. So we are encouraged to hear these words. Words of encouragement for all of God's Saints on this All Saints Sunday. And together we say AMEN