

All Saint's Day celebrated Nov 4, 2007 at Second Baptist Church, Lincoln, NE;
Robert C. Molby, Interim Pastor

All Saints' Day
Luke 6:20-31 (NRSV)

²⁰⁾ Then he looked up at his disciples and said: “Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

²¹⁾ “Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled. “Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.

²²⁾ “Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. ²³⁾ Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets.

²⁴⁾ “But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.

²⁵⁾ “Woe to you who are full now, for you will be hungry. Woe to you who are laughing now, for you will mourn and weep.

²⁶⁾ “Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets.

²⁷⁾ “But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,

²⁸⁾ bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. ²⁹⁾ If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes your coat do not withhold even your shirt. ³⁰⁾ Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. ³¹⁾ Do to others as you would have them do to you.”

One of the tasks of a church during the interim time is to get in touch with their history. Last Sunday our children opened the door on some of our history when they identified the wooden cross that is above the baptistery. When we asked about that cross Cleo Craigie told us that it was a memorial to her father, Ray Cameron. You who were here remember how the children looked back at Cleo, as I did, sort of in awe. She has been a member here for 72 years having joined when she was 12 years old. She is one of three or perhaps four generations in this church. Our treasurer, John Horstman, is her son and I believe that he has a son in the First Baptist Church. Perhaps there are other members of that family in this church or in other churches. Thanks are to God for all this family and other families like them who are in this church!

As I said, the children opened the door to a little bit of our recent history. It was fun; that is how it is supposed to be in getting in touch with our history—fun, as well as inspirational. Today I want to build on that experience and celebrate communion in the process.

I would like for you to think about the people who have influenced your life up to this point. Can you remember your early school teachers? I can remember mine, call their names and remember a little bit about each of them. Of course when you go to a one room school where all eight grades are taught and you have the same teacher for each of them—well, you don't forget. Those teachers influenced my life. I remember some of my high school teachers and some of my favorite classes. I remember many faces and some even have names I can recall. I remember my FFA ag teacher, Mr. Tillinghass. He was also my youth leader in the church. I remember some of my athletic coaches. They had to coach all sports in these small high schools or at least oversee those who coached other sports while they were coaching another sport. I remember a Mr. Cink who had a voice that was not loud but penetrating and could be heard all over the gym even while we were practicing basketball. And I remember Mr. Keister, one of my high school principals. He encouraged me to go on to college and pursue training towards being in Christian work. At the same time he did not push his faith upon me. In fact I don't know what church he went to but I am convinced that he was a follower of Christ just by the way he lived and the way he did his work as a high school principal.

Of course I had college and seminary professors who left their marks upon me. In their lives I could see the handprint of God.

And there were my pastors through the years. An early pastor was Rev. Robert Jones of the then United Brethern Church. That denomination later merged with the Methodist Church and it became the United Methodist Church. That United Brethern Church was like the one room school house, all classes, adults down to the tiny ones, all met in one room. We had various sections we met in, this corner or that corner, on the stage or in the center. As I recall there were no dividers between classes. There was a stove in the middle to heat with when the weather got cold and in north central Kansas it could get cold, even as it does in Nebraska. My father was the Sunday School Superintendent in those days. When S.S. was over we just sat in the pews and the preacher took over. We kids sat with our parents and learned to sing parts as our parents guided us with their finger pointing to the notes. That was also the nursery, by the way, sitting with our parents in the pews.

Later, in high school in another part of the state of Kansas, the Methodist Church in that small town got a new pastor. I had declared my intention to follow Christ and become a minister in the Baptist Church which was just across the street and down the block from the Methodist Church. My pastor was Rev. Howard Sorensen who was to me like Paul was to Timothy in the NT. One day, shortly after that, I met this new Methodist preacher in town. He was kind of short and round and greeted me very friendly and warmly. He said, "I'd like to think that I might have had some influence in your deciding to become a minister." It was Robert Jones, my pastor in my boyhood days! In those days I looked up to him because I was little, now I was looking down on him with about the same height I have now! Yes, he did have an influence on me, as well as many other pastors.

And my family also had great influence on me, both my parents and grandparents on both sides of the family. I could go on and on about the saints in my life and what they have meant to me. I hope you have been doing the same in your life as I have talked and would love to have me shut up so you can tell your story.

You and I have been living among saints all our lives and we have taken them for granted. May God forgive us and may we today say an extra thank you to these saints who are living among us and to God for those saints who have gone on before us.

Think about the saints in this church, those living among us and those who have gone before. In the bulletin we have tried to list those members who passed away during this past Christian Year. The Christian Year begins with Advent and ends usually the Sunday after Thanksgiving. These, and others who have gone on before us, are remembered as partaking in the Lord's Supper with us today.

Our Gospel reading for today is Luke's version of the Beatitudes. Jesus tells us:

- Blessed are the poor in spirit
- Blessed are those who feel the weight of the world's suffering
- Blessed are the humble
- Blessed are those who hunger and long for what is right and good
- Blessed are those who show mercy and compassion
- Blessed are the ones who are pure in heart, who don't have any room for bitterness or anger or avarice
- Blessed are those who work for peace and reconciliation in the home, the church, the community

- Blessed are those who are willing to accept the ridicule and derision of others in order to stand up for what is right and good as a disciple of Jesus Christ

The people we remember, the saints in our lives, were people like that. They all shared those qualities and characteristics. This begs the question, “Will I be remembered? Will you be remembered in the years to come? And, how will we be remembered?”

If we wish to be remembered in the same way that we remember with gratitude and thanksgiving the saints in our lives, then we need to be developing those same traits and qualities and characteristics that Jesus holds out before us today. We are called to be loving, kind, compassionate, generous and faithful people. This is the way God created us to be, and when we are anything less than that we diminish our own lives, and we diminish the lives of those around us. On the other hand, when we live according to God’s will, we end up experiencing life to its fullest, and we bring joy and happiness to those around us. And those are the kind of people that we remember!

Luke’s version of the Beatitudes ends with the Golden Rule, “Do to others as you would have them do to you.” Almost everyone knows that verse. It tells how Christians are to live their lives. How would I like to be treated if I were hungry, or thirsty, or in prison? How would I like to be treated if I were ill or crippled or of a different color of skin or different mentality, or of a different religion?

So, let love, compassion, mercy, peace, humility, generosity, graciousness characterize your life. Take a serious look at yourself and see if you are becoming the person you want to be, the person God made you to be. Strive for the qualities you admire and respect in others; ask God to help you. You, too, will be numbered among the saints that we honor and thank God for today.

As we join in the Lord’s Supper we also are joined in a mystical communion with our loved ones, past and present in the company of Jesus Christ. We can anticipate that day when we will be reunited for all eternity to share this special time together.