Sermon: Blessed Are…
Matthew 5:1-12

Sermon for Meadowbrook Congregational Church by Dr. Katelyn Brackney
All Saints Day | November 1, 2026

5 When Jesus[a] saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he sat down, his disciples
came to him. 2 And he began to speak and taught them, saying:
3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
5 "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.
6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.
7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.
8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.
9 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
10 "Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
11 "Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely[b] on my account. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

I'm not sure about you, but this is a passage I have heard all throughout my life. Oftentimes when that is the case, it can become hard to really hear the words that are being shared because they become too familiar. Kind of like how the vastness of the great lakes or the majestic views of mountains can become "normal" and not catch our eyes the same way they once did if we become accustomed to them. However, I'm hoping today we can hear these words anew and allow them to surprise us.

Last week we talked about loving God, self, and neighbor. And throughout the last few months we have been journeying through Matthew and learning about what the kingdom of heaven is like. But where we picked up was after this chapter, and since this was one of the options for today's text, I thought I'd back us up a bit and take a look at Jesus' inaugural sermon here in Matthew 5.

Here he shares what life in God's kingdom looks like, which lays a foundation for all that he teaches from that point forward. It is a cosmic and social reversal and renewal, and it continues to challenge us today, as well as be good news - particularly for those often seen as lowly or lesser.
But before we dig into what that good news is, I want to do a little bit of vocabulary work, as this week begins discussion of something that will show up again over the next few weeks.
Who here has heard of the word "eschatology?"

For those of you who have not, or maybe need a quick refresher, "eschatology" is the part of theology that is concerned with the end. It is a combination of two Greek words: *eschaton* (ending, last, final) + *logia* (study of, thinking about). And it may be surprising to you, or maybe not, but today's text, and the next few we will look at in the coming weeks, have to do with the "end;" but less "the end" as in conclusion, and more as in the "fulfillment of things." And here is why that distinction is important...because the fulfillment of things helps us be less concerned about when and how the conclusion of things will take place, and more concerned with asking what is it all for? What might the perfection and fulfillment of all things be about? Another way to think about it is less "the end is near," and more "the beginning is near." There's energy there.

Thinking about things this way helps us think about participation in that fulfillment instead of simply making it to or escaping the end. It also helps us be open to seeing glimpses of the fulfillment of things, as described in Matthew and other places in scripture, both now and more fully, later. The term for this perspective is:

- Inaugurated eschatology – the belief that the promises regarding "the age to come" are already available to us through the life, death,

and resurrection of Jesus, even while they are not yet fully realized or actualized in this present age

So there are some fancy words and definitions for you…eschatology and inaugurated eschatology. A term I like to use that feels a bit more friendly or usable is "already and not yet," which leans into that idea that there are aspects of the age to come, or the kingdom of heaven, now in our midst, though not to the full extent that they will be in the end.

This seems particularly fitting on a day like today, All Saints' Day, as we make space for remembering the ones that have gone on before us, recalling the influence of their lives, which remains with us, even while they themselves have gone. Already and not yet and we are not yet with them again.
And it is that sentiment that we find in Matthew 5:1-12, too.
Here Jesus is doing something pretty radical in sharing that the ones who are often dismissed or seen as lowly are actually the ones who are and will be blessed. It is an already and not yet kind of passage.

One of the practices I often do when I'm prepping for a sermon is to write a paraphrase of the text I am preaching on to help me have a greater imagination around it and see it with a fresh perspective. I want to share the paraphrase I wrote for this week's text, and as I read it, I invite you to consider the ways these statements of blessings are both current realities and future promises, as well as how these statements are reversals and renewals of what is considered "the norm."

When Jesus saw the crowds he decided to step away, so he went up the mountain, and when his disciples came to him he began to teach them, saying:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, the depressed and dampened by the world, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven

Blessed are those who mourn, the grieving, the lonely, the

broken, for they will be comforted

Blessed are the meek, the patient, the gentle, unpretentious and peaceful, for they will inherit the earth

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, the ones who long for the world to be made right, for justice and mercy to reign, for they will be filled and no longer hunger or thirst

Blessed are the merciful, the ones who forgive and show compassion, who stay soft-hearted even when they don't want to or the world tells them otherwise

Blessed are the peacemakers, the ones who do the hard work of creating peace for all, not just for some, for they will be called children of God

Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, who put their whole selves into the work of justice and who accept what consequences may come for doing what is right, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. My ways are not always popular or accepted, but don't let the words or actions of others deter you. Keep up the good, holy, and hard work of loving your neighbor - the good trouble kind of work. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, just as it was for the ones they oppressed before you.

When we hear the list of those who are blessed it doesn't really seem like they are, right? How are they blessed? The blessedness in these texts do not ignore the realities of the suffering that is currently at work, but also holds with hope the promise of a future where those realities change into something new, something whole and restored. The blessedness or some translations say "happiness" (but I think it's deeper than that) in the moment comes from relationship with God that promises a restored future, while also inviting a new reality in the places

where there are disparities and brokenness, inviting us into the way things are being made well.

One commentary I read said:

> "We live now in the tension between the "already" and the "not yet." The reality of God's reign that one day will come in all its fullness already impinges on our present reality. It casts an illuminating light from the future that God intends into the present context. The reign of God is—even now—a "substantive reality" that encourages faithful living oriented by love. It shapes a new and different reality "Which maintains standards and perceptions different from the dominant society." So the vision of these teachings in Matthew sees God's reign not only as a future hope but also something that we work for and live into even now." (Belief Commentary, p.72-3)

That statement of God's reign being not only a future hope but something we work for now reminded me of a phrase I learned in grad school which said that "hope becomes, not our way out of the world, but our way into it." To me, this means, that that the hope we have in hearing things like "blessed are the poor in spirit," or "blessed are the peacemakers" shouldn't move us to hunker down and wait for the end when things will be better, but rather, to work for the world that God promises, here and now, as a participation in the restoration of all things. Living in that tension of the already and not yet, because Christian hope is not escapism. It is participation.
It is participation in the restoring, reconciling, and renewing work of God where Already the poor in spirit are encouraged and loved, even if they are not yet able to be completely joyful.

Already those who mourn are comforted, even if they are not yet fully restored and full of life.
Already the meek are the ones who show us a more gentle and humble way to live, even if that way is not yet popular or the most prominent.
Already the merciful share their gift of abundant forgiveness and compassion, even as the world doesn't understand the beautiful, difficult necessity of showing mercy.
Already the peacemakers show up and help shape our world into something more whole and restored, even if there is still an abundance of unrest.
Already people put their lives on the line to speak up for justice and "right-ness," and not yet are those problems solved or people able to do that work without persecution or being seen as problems themselves.
Already the work of Christian hope and love that leads to human flourishing and care for the earth is being done and shared, and not yet is it accepted as the good news that it is by all who see or hear it.

The reality of "already and not yet" challenges us, and perhaps sometimes can be discouraging, but I hope, despite the challenge and discouragement, there is also a great draw to allow these reversals, these prompts for restoration, to shape us as we hear scripture and as we join with the many others who have gone before us in this work and this life, who have felt that tension, too. For all the saints, the holy ones who have done the good trouble kind of work toward healing and human flourishing, continue to shape our lives, too, and help us know that we are not alone in the restoring work of God. Thanks be God.
Amen