**Notes for Next Sunday**

All Saints Sunday

FIRST READING – Revelation 7:2-17

**2﻿ Then I saw another angel coming up from the east, having the seal of the living God. He called out in a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm the land and the sea: ﻿3﻿ “Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God.” ﻿4﻿ Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel. ﻿5﻿ From he tribe of Judah 12,000 were sealed, from the tribe of Reuben 12,000, from the tribe of Gad 12,000, ﻿6﻿ from the tribe of Asher 12,000, from the tribe of Naphtali 12,000, from the tribe of Manasseh 12,000, ﻿7﻿ from the tribe of Simeon 12,000, from the tribe of Levi 12,000, from the tribe of Issachar 12,000, ﻿8﻿ from the tribe of Zebulun 12,000, from the tribe of Joseph 12,000, from the tribe of Benjamin 12,000.**

Between the sixth and seventh seals (6:12–17 and 8:1–5) there is an *interlude* in which John sees two scenes. In the first scene he sees the 144,000 sealed (7:1–8), and in the second scene he sees the glorious picture of the saints before God’s throne in heaven (7:9–17). The 144,000 represent God’s people on earth in perfect order and thus ready to march. This is interpreted to be the church militant, poised and ready to carry out the marching orders—the mission—that her Lord has given to her. In the second scene John sees the great multitude of people before God’s heavenly throne. Their number is so great that it cannot be counted. This is the most beautiful picture in the entire Bible of the saints of God in heaven: the church the church triumphant. (CC Brighton pp. 180-181)

**9﻿ After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. ﻿10﻿ And they cried out in a loud voice: “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.” ﻿11﻿ All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ﻿12﻿ saying: “Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!” ﻿13﻿ Then one of the elders asked me, “These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?” ﻿14﻿ I answered, “Sir, you know.” And he said, “These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb. ﻿15﻿ Therefore, “they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them. ﻿16﻿ Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. ﻿17﻿ For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”**

The second scene in this great interlude is in sharp contrast to the first. “After these things” in 7:9 indicates a fresh and new sight to be viewed, a sight that probably none on earth had ever been permitted and privileged to behold. The church militant on earth appeared as the 144,000. Though symbolic, this number suggests a much smaller crowd of people than the great host in heaven that is too numerous to count (7:9). In addition, the church militant on earth (as witnessed by the orderly arrangement of the twelve tribes) was prepared to march out in mission. In contrast, the great multitude of people before the heavenly throne of God is at rest and peace, celebrating the results of the mission of the church on earth. As the 144,000 stand poised to be launched out into a world of turmoil and suffering, they are quite aware of the peril they face, though they are confident of God’s sealing protection. But the church triumphant, at rest and peace and awaiting the final act of God’s judgment and the resurrection at the End, will never again experience tribulation and persecution on earth. For them the latter part of Paul’s words has come true, “I reckon that the sufferings of this present time cannot be compared to the glory that shall be revealed to us” (Rom 8:18). (CC Brighton pp. 193)

GOSPEL – Matthew 5:1-12

**Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, ﻿2﻿ and he began to teach 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 be shown mercy. ﻿8﻿ Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. ﻿9﻿ Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God. 10﻿ Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ﻿11﻿ “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. ﻿12﻿ Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.**

Jesus introduces His Sermon on the Mount with nine beatitudes that detail the future blessedness of His disciples. These promised blessings are God’s gracious gifts to those who repent and trust Christ for righteousness. Only after Jesus has assured His disciples of God’s goodness to them does He call on them, in the rest of the sermon, to be good and do good. When we recognize our own spiritual poverty, when the Lord leads us to hunger and thirst for God’s righteousness, when He makes us pure in heart so that we seek to worship only the true God, then we are blessed now and forever. (TLSB)

Jesus began His sermon by nine times declaring His disciples blessed because of what God had in store for them. Jesus was not making ethical demands of His followers but was describing blessings they would fully enjoy in the new heaven and new earth (Rev. 21:1). The beatitudes are a common literary form found throughout Scripture (e.g., Ps. 1:1; Luke 11:28; Rev. 19:9). (TLSB)

V. 1 *disciple.* The disciple was a learner or apprentice. It is common in Gospels and Acts, but never used in Epistles. Often means the 12 called “apostles” but can also mean a larger group of adherents. Here the term includes the four fishermen plus others from the crowds who responded to Jesus’ call to repent. (TLSB)

V. 3 *Blessed.* The word means more than “happy,” because happiness is an emotion often dependent on outward circumstances. “Blessed” here refers to the ultimate well-being and distinctive spiritual joy of those who share in the salvation of the kingdom of God. (CSB)

V. 3 *theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* The kingdom is not something earned. It is more of a gift than a reward. This is a future surety and a present reality though grace.