

**"Being an Every Day Saint"**

Matt 5:1-12

Nov. 1, 2020 (All Saints Day)

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Remembering Our Saints video presentation
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According to the church calendar, today is the 22<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Pentecost, but today is also a special day known as All Saints Day.

Various religious traditions observe this day in different ways, and some churches emphasize this day more than others. Perhaps some of you grew up in a church where All Saints Day was a very important day, while maybe some of you grew up in a church where it was hardly mentioned.

I won't take the time this morning to explain the origins of this day, but here at St. Mark's, All Saints Day has been the day where we remember in our worship service - those who have gone before us in the Christian faith.

Specifically, we remember all the members and friends who were part of this congregation who have gone to be with the Lord, and in our worship service, we say their names, we light a candle and we say a prayer on their behalf.

This year, the following individuals went to be with the Lord: Sunny Cordromp, Dick Meyer, Earl Theaker, Martha Berry and K.C. Synn

What makes this year's All Saints Day much more significant is that this year, our church has not had the chance to hold Memorial Services for any of these people.

We haven't had the chance to gather with the family members of those who have passed away, to join in their mourning, to share in their grief and even to celebrate the lives of those who passed away.

And so for this year's All Saints Day, I thought we'd take some time during our Sunday Worship service to hear from a few family members of those who passed away and how they would like for us to remember their beloved.

A brief video was played in the service at this time followed by a prayer

*Heavenly Father, to lose a loved is never easy. Even you shed tears, at the passing of a dear friend Lazarus.*

*This year, some of us have had to say our goodbyes to spouses - husbands, wives, to parents - mothers, fathers and to dear friends. This year however it has been even more challenging to grieve their passing or to celebrate their lives because of the restrictions due to the pandemic.*

*But in our worship this morning, we take this time to gather all together, and as our first hymn reminds us to stand in celebration as the "saints go marching in" Oh Lord, oh Lord how I want to be in that number, when the saints gather round the throne.*

*Heavenly Father, we ask for your peace and comfort for the family members who have gone through loss this year. Grant them your holy comfort and your holy peace and surround them with your loving embrace.*

*And here in our church, as we remember their names and give thanks to you, for the gifts that they were, we remember The Name that that is above all names, and it is in His Name - Jesus Christ that we say our prayers. Amen.*

Back in 2011, an author by the name of Jana Riess decided she wanted to write a book that described her experience with practicing the Spiritual Disciplines. Things like fasting and prayer and observing the Sabbath.

So, for every chapter of her book, she chronicled her experiences with one of the disciplines, which she attempted for one whole month, and at the end of one year, she was hoping to write a book as an encouragement to others.

But what she found out was that the disciplines were a lot harder than she thought, and instead of a "how to" book, what ended up happening was most of the book was about her failed attempt at each of the disciplines.

So, how do you come up with a title for such a book like that? Well, her editor suggested the title: FLUNKING SAINTHOOD and that's what the book was called.

Lynne Cochran, one of our church members actually loaned me - this copy, which I am very grateful for. I haven't forgotten to return it Lynne, it's just that I haven't finished it yet, but after reading a few chapters what I have come away with so far, is that even if we don't achieve "perfection" in any of the spiritual disciplines, it's in our attempt that we find our deepest spiritual connections with the person of Jesus Christ.

There's a quote on the back cover of the book that reads: *"Lots of books will teach you how to be a success. Here's one that will show you the advantages of falling short."*

"Flunking Sainthood."

On this day known as All Saints Day, it's a good thing to set aside time to "remember the saints," who have gone before us, but this morning, I'd like to remind you that every single one of you can be a "saint" too.

Maybe not a "saint" with a statue made in your image and maybe not a "saint" who was canonized by the Pope (although don't let me stop you if that's your goal in life!) but I'd like to encourage all of you that you can be an "every day saint,"

the kind that lives his/her life following the examples of Jesus Christ.

### Matt 5:1-12

Our scripture passage is from Matthew 5:1-12. It's the beginning portion of Jesus' Sermon on the Mt also known as the Beatitudes.

*Now when [Jesus] saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them, saying:*

*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.  
Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.  
Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.  
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.  
Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.  
Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.  
Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.  
Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of God.*

*Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

### How to Become a Saint

According to the Vatican, it used to be that if you wanted to become a "saint" there were a few steps involved.

First - you had to have been deceased for no less than 5 years.

Second - you have to have performed a miracle - one that is verify-able. In the absence of a verifiable miracle, if you were "martyred" (that is - if you were killed because of your faith) that was an acceptable substitute.

Third - you have to have lived a life that demonstrated "heroic virtue."

And fourth - you have to be "canonized."

It's a rather lengthy process and I'm sure it's more complicated than how I just described it, and the last person who was named as a Saint was Oscar Romero, former archbishop of San Salvador back in 2018.

Well long before people became saints, Jesus preached a sermon where He described not the process of canonization or how to become a saint, but He preached about the lifestyle of someone who lived their life in accordance to God's will.

And in that sermon, He didn't say that you had to perform miracles. He didn't even say that you had to die for your faith, like how martyrs did, He was talking about living out your faith, not dying for your faith, and what we found out is that He was describing the kind of life that saints would live, every day, in every place, among every people.

Jesus said:

*"Blessed are the **poor**....*

*"Blessed are those who **mourn**,*

*"Blessed are the **meek**,*

*"Blessed are those who **hunger and thirst for righteousness***

*"Blessed are the **merciful***

*"Blessed are the **pure in heart***

*"Blessed are the **peacemakers***

*and blessed are those who are **persecuted** because of righteousness"*

Most translations use the word "blessed" at the beginning of each verse, but some translations use the word "happy" instead.

*Happy are the merciful,*

*Happy are those who are pure heart,*

*Happy are the peacemakers,*

John Hardon, an American Jesuit Priest once said: *"The saints are the only really happy people on earth."*

They are happy - they are blessed.

This morning, I wanted to share a short message on just three of the qualities that Jesus mentioned in the beatitudes, and to encourage you to practice them this week.

I can't promise that it will turn you into saints or put halo's above your heads, but becoming "every day saints" always begins with a step, and before you know it, you'll be walking with Jesus.

## MEEKNESS

The first trait or quality that everyday saints possess is what Jesus said in vs 5,  
*"Blessed are the MEEK."*

This is a quality that all the saints possess. This is a trait that all the saints demonstrate and that's meekness.

What is Meekness?

Well, I can tell you what it is not. Meekness is not weakness. Meekness is not powerless, rather, meekness is power under control.

A person who is meek uses all their power, uses all their resources and uses all their ability/skill/talent for the benefit and in service to others.

At home - they are always serving family members.

In friendships - they seek to benefit their friends.

In community - they strive to make it a better place,

And in church - they serve in the same spirit as Christ served others.

This past year, I had the honor to officiate the graveside services for several of our church members. We didn't get to have memorial services here inside our sanctuary, but for some of them we had graveside services.

And when it was time for family members and friends to share their memories and eulogies of the departed, one thing that stood out to me was that very few of them mentioned the accomplishments or awards that the individual received, instead, what they talked about was how giving and generous they were to their family and friends.

*"She was always there for us,,,"*

*"He did whatever he could for us"*

*She always put her family first even if it meant sacrificing herself"*

That's meekness.

One time, Jesus was alone in a garden and praying, and in His prayer He said these words: *"Not my will but yours be done."*

Not what I want but what you want God. That's meekness.

Another time Jesus demonstrated meekness was on the cross at Calvary. When the soldiers mocked Him and said to Him: *"If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself."*

Jesus - most definitely could have saved Himself. He could have called down a legion of angels to come and rescue Him. But that was not the Father's will, and that was not Jesus' way. Instead, He gave up His life in service and in sacrifice to others.

Even on the eve of His arrest, Jesus wanted to host a meal for 12 of His closest friends, and right before the Passover meal, Jesus went to each of His disciples and washed their feet.

*"Jesus was always there for us..."*

*He did whatever He could for us"*

*He was always putting His family first even if it meant sacrificing Himself."*

To live your life in sacrifice to others.

I want to show you a picture and I'm going to take a guess and say you probably don't know who this is. That's because the man in the picture would have wanted it that way.



This is a pix of a man named Chuck Feeney and he is the co-founder of a giant retail store called Duty Free. If you've ever been in an airport, than you've seen his store and they are located all over the world.

Being the co-founder of Duty Free has made Chuck a very wealthy man, somewhere in the neighborhood of some \$8 billion dollars.

*"What would you do with \$8 billion dollars? How would you spend \$8 B dollars?"*  
We could be here all morning trying to answer that one.

Well, Chuck Feeney could have done anything he wanted with \$8 billion dollars, but instead of buying mansions and airplanes and yachts and islands, Chucks goal was to give all his money away to charity.

Most of it has gone to education, schools, buildings and scholarships. Then to health and science and research. A few billion to his alma mater, a few billion to social issues, but the thing about Chuck is that he wanted to make sure that none of it brought fame/glory to himself.

In fact, you won't find his name on any building on a college campus, or his name plastered on a hospital or even a scholarship. That's how anonymous Chuck wanted to live his life.

As of last month Sept. 15<sup>th</sup> Chuck has given almost everything away, and now he lives in a small rented apartment no more lavish than a college freshman dorm. He doesn't own a car - he even wears a \$10 Casio watch, and yet, he considers himself blessed. (I consider him a Saint.)

Now, you might be thinking: *"Well, gee, if I had that kind of money, I could do some good in the world, and maybe become a saint..."*

but someone once said: *"You don't have to give up your wealth and turn into saints in order to contribute to this planet. But there are ways through which you can fill an empty cup without emptying your kettle."*

Meekness.

## PURITY OF HEART

A second trait or quality that everyday saints possess is what Jesus said in vs 8,

*"Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God."*

That's the NIV translation of Matt 5:8. Listen to how the MSG version translates that verse: *You're blessed when you get you inside world your mind and heart put right. Then you can see God in the outside world.*

To have a pure heart - to have a pure mind is to have a crystal clear heart and a crystal clear spiritual lens so that when you look out at the world with your natural eyes - you can see God in it.

One time, a group of religious leaders brought a sinful person before Jesus. She had committed a sin - she broke one of the 10 commandments.

But the way they brought her and presented her to Jesus was in an attempt to get Jesus to look at her the same way THEY saw her. They wanted Jesus to cast judgement on her. They wanted Jesus to condemn her.

But instead, Jesus chose to look at her differently - He looked at her not like others did instead Jesus looked at her in the very same way that GOD did - as a

person who needed to be loved and even more so - at that moment - as a person in need of forgiveness.

There was a purity in the way Jesus saw the woman. Doesn't mean Jesus was naïve or didn't know the ways of the world - He knew. But instead of looking at people thru the lens of human sin, he chose to look at the world thru the lens of God's love.

Everyday saints have this supernatural ability to see the world this way. The ability to see God - the ability to see His kingdom, even in places and even in people who seem the farthest away.

## HUNGER AND THIRST FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS

The 3<sup>RD</sup> trait or quality that everyday saints possess is what Jesus said in vs 6, *"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled."*

Again, listen to how the MSG version translates that verse:

*"You're blessed when you've worked up a good appetite for God. He's food and drink in the best meal you'll ever eat."* What a great play on words!

*"Longing for the Lord!"*

*"Hungry for the Holy"*

*"Starved for the Spiritual"*

*"Growling stomach for the Scriptures"*

Back at home - we usually eat dinner around 5:30 pm (give or take.)

I usually take my lunches right here at church, but sometimes when I get home

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I can't wait until 5:30, and so I'll sneak into the kitchen to grab a "little snack" to tie me over until dinner.

Now, usually, I'm pretty good about snacking - I don't want to ruin my dinner, but if I'm not careful, I'll choose the wrong snack or eat too much junk food, and when that happens, when 5:30 comes around and it's time to sit down for dinner, I no longer have an appetite, because I've filled myself up with junk food.

Watch out for the junk food.

Saints know how to say "no" to spiritual junk food. I'm not talking about, saying "no" to twinkies or saying "no" to ding-dongs, but saying "no" to the kind of things that fill you up and leave no more room for God!

Things like worry. Things like fear. Things like hate.

Listen to the opening lines of a famous prayer by St. Francis of Assisi:

*Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace.  
Where there is HATRED, let me sow love,  
Where there is INJURY - pardon,  
Where there is DOUBT - faith,  
Where there is DESPAIR- hope,  
Where there is DARKNESS - light  
Where there is SADNESS - joy.*

Notice how St. Francis switches out - all the unhealthy junk food, and replaces it with things full of spiritual nutrition.

Everyday saints - watch what they eat. They are careful of what goes into their minds/hearts and they stay hungry for God!

To all the Saints in Christ Jesus who are part of our worshipping community, and to all the Saints who have gone before us, may your lives bless everyone, who crosses your path and may your lives and the way you live them - shine a light towards Jesus!

God bless you all.