

✠ Matthew 5:1-12 ✠

IN NOMINE IESU

To the saints of God belongs the kingdom of heaven. The saints of God shall be comforted. The saints of God shall inherit the earth. They shall be satisfied. They shall receive mercy. The saints of God shall see God. They shall be called the sons of God. The saints of God inherit the kingdom of heaven.

The saints of God are ever looking forward to the future. We do not worry about tomorrow; we rejoice in the promise of salvation. We rejoice in the promise of the resurrection. By faith we live, not by sight.

By sight we see war and famine, disease and sickness, heartache and betrayal, death and graves. By sight we see our miseries and know our mortality. We see our failures and our sins, our vain attempts at being holy and upright. But the saints are the ones who come out of this great tribulation. The saints have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. The saints of God wait on the Lord.

Those blessed souls who have fallen asleep in the Lord, who have departed this life in the hope of a more glorious life, a heavenly dwelling, await the vindication of our God. They wait as those who are asleep waiting to be awakened. For since Jesus died and rose again, God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep (1 Thessalonians 4:14). The saints who have gone before us, from Adam to the dearly departed of today, wait patiently for the Day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So also do we who have not yet laid down our heads in the sleep of death, wait on the Lord. We wait as those who have hope, not as those who have no hope. We wait on the Lord even as it is written, "For the Lord will vindicate His people and have compassion on His servants" (Psalm 135:14).

That is what saints do, at least for now. We wait. We wait for the consolation of Israel. We wait for the day of vengeance of our God. We wait for the day of the resurrection.

And the Lord is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul who seeks Him. It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord (Lamentations 3:25-26). Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him. For the wicked shall be cut off, but those who wait for the Lord shall inherit the land (Psalm 37:7, 9). They shall rise again, rid of this mortal body with all of its frailties and weakness, having put on an imperishable body, glorified by God, and enter into the Promised Land, the heavenly city whose foundations are built by God (Hebrews 11:10).

A heavenly dwelling, not this land of dust and worms, dead crops and drought, this land where our loved ones die and our friends betray us. A land flowing with milk and honey. A land where the lion shall lie down with the lamb, and the babe shall play with the cobra. A land where no tears fall and no heart is broken. Where none shall hunger or thirst, for God will be their portion, their food and drink. Where all will lie down in green pastures and drink from the quiet waters of the River of Life. A land where the Tree of Life heals the nations. No

longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His servants will worship Him (Revelation 22:2-3).

But the false saint does not wait upon the Lord. He does not wait for a more glorious home, but revels in what he has here and now. He comes, not in the expectation of salvation and forgiveness, the bestowal of life, but because he believes himself to be holy and good. And so the false saint comes to prove his worthiness, not seek mercy.

The false saint thinks he can do it himself. The false saint prays good prayers, but thinks they are heard because he prayed them, not because God promises to hear prayer. The false saint reads his Bible, not to seek the discipline of the Lord but to empower himself and his own notions of God. The false saint hears sermons, not as one coming to hear the words of Jesus, but as one looking for an ax to grind. The false saint comes to the Holy Supper, not as one seeking mercy, but as one who thinks he deserves it.

The false saint does not wait upon the Lord but thinks he has all the answers. He does not come to God as a little child, wide-eyed and expecting mystery and love and discipline. He approaches God like a puzzle to be solved, or one that has been solved and now God must confirm him in his ideas of who God is or is not, and in his ideas of what is right and what is wrong.

False saints are not poor in spirit; they are rich in ego and having it their way. False saints do not mourn but are assured in themselves that they are good and right, never questioning their own motives. They are not meek but bullies. They do not hunger and thirst for righteousness because they think themselves already righteous. They are not pure in heart but out of their heart flows pride, envy, hatred, and malice. They are not peacemakers; they always accuse others without forgiveness. They are not blessed but cursed.

False saints do not think the preacher of repentance preaches to them. Surely he is preaching to so-and-so, or to himself, they are in need of rebuke. Or perhaps, more benevolently, surely he is preaching to so-and-so, they are in need of healing. But not me. I neither need rebuke nor healing. I have it all figured out.

Sure, I mess up sometimes – abuse my kids with words or blows or neglect, run stop signs, live promiscuously, laugh at lewd jokes, ogle my co-workers, rebel against authority – there have been times that I have not loved my neighbor. But I've atoned for my sins because I go to church, or because I provide a good living and comfortable home for my family, or because I never complain when people ask me to do something for them. I've atoned for my sins and shortcomings because I've done good deeds; I've paid my dues. I'm secure in my sins; they're not bigger than I can handle. Repent. You can't atone for your own sins. No matter how small a sin seems, it is always bigger than you. Even the most mundane and common sin brings death, and death is death no matter how big the bullet is that brings it. Repent.

False saints never repent because they think they having nothing to repent of. But our Lord Jesus did not die for generalities. He did not die for ideologies or vague impressions of sin. He died for you. He died for your specific sins; for your hatred of your children or spouse; for your rebellion against authority; for your wondering eyes and jealous heart. He died for your blaspheme when you say you do no sin, or when you say in false humility that you know you sin, you just don't know when. Repent.

God hates sin. He destroys sin. He cannot have sin in His presence, and so casts it away from His presence.

But He loves you. He hates sin but loves the sinner. He is bigger than sin. He re-creates you in His image, fashioning you into the likeness of His Son. He casts your sin far away from Himself, as far as the east is from the west, but draws you every closer to Himself. So close that you eat His flesh and drink His blood. He draws you ever closer to Him, making His dwelling with you. For He loves you and desires you.

By His Spirit He creates in you a clean spirit. He washes your sin-stained robes, robes that could they speak would tell the most horrid tales of wandering lusts and thoughtless acts of self-indulgence. He takes your robes and bleaches them white in the blood of the Lamb. Your rags no longer condemn you; they have been made new. Now you stand dressed in robes of righteousness.

He prepares a place for you. He prepares a heavenly banquet for you in the presence of your enemies. In the presence of your sin and the accusations of the devil the world and your own sinful nature, He gives you the heavenly meal meant to bring you to His heavenly home.

Do not be afraid. The Lord has placed His name, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, upon you. He will bring you out of this great tribulation. Therefore, wait, o sons of Abraham, for the consolation of Israel. For they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint (Isaiah 40:31).

Come; come everyone who is weary. Come everyone who thirsts for righteousness, to be rid of sin and shame, come to the waters; and he who has no money to pay back what he owes, come, buy and eat! Come buy wine and milk without money and without price (cf. Isaiah 55:1). For, behold, the Lord is before you. He is your portion and your strength, your Rock and your Redeemer, in Him you shall trust.

Thus says the Lord Jesus Christ, the God of Abraham, who formed you in the womb, who made you, who knows you by name: "Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver you" (Psalm 50:15). For, behold, your eyes have seen the Lord's salvation that He has prepared before the face of all people, a light to enlighten the Gentiles and the glory of His people Israel. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

In the name of the FATHER and of the ✠ SON and of the HOLY SPIRIT.

✠ AMEN ✠