



## Who Wants to Be a Saint? – Touchpoint for November 2, 2022

**Luke 6:20-31 The Message (MSG)** [Jesus] spoke:

*“You’re blessed when you’ve lost it all. God’s kingdom is there for the finding. You’re blessed when you’re ravenously hungry. Then you’re ready for the Messianic meal. You’re blessed when the tears flow freely. Joy comes with the morning.*”

*“Count yourself blessed every time someone cuts you down or throws you out, every time someone smears or blackens your name to discredit me. What it means is that the truth is too close for comfort and that that person is uncomfortable. You can be glad when that happens—skip like a lamb, if you like!—for even though they don’t like it, I do . . . and all heaven applauds. And know that you are in good company; my preachers and witnesses have always been treated like this.*”

*“But it’s trouble ahead if you think you have it made. What you have is all you’ll ever get. And it’s trouble ahead if you’re satisfied with yourself. Your self will not satisfy you for long. And it’s trouble ahead if you think life’s all fun and games. There’s suffering to be met, and you’re going to meet it. There’s trouble ahead when you live only for the approval of others, saying what flatters them, doing what indulges them. Popularity contests are not truth contests—look how many scoundrel preachers were approved by your ancestors! Your task is to be true, not popular.*”

*“To you who are ready for the truth, I say this: Love your enemies. Let them bring out the best in you, not the worst. When someone gives you a hard time, respond with the energies of prayer for that person. If someone slaps you in the face, stand there and take it. If someone grabs your shirt, giftwrap your best coat and make a present of it. If someone takes unfair advantage of you, use the occasion to practice the servant life. No more tit-for-tat stuff. Live generously.*”

*“Here is a simple rule of thumb for behavior: Ask yourself what you want people to do for you; then grab the initiative and do it for them!”*

### **Grace and Peace from the Mystery in whom we live and move and have our being.**

From the New Revised Standard Version translation: *“Blessed are you who are poor. Blessed are you who mourn. Blessed are you who are hated.”*

This coming Sunday is All Saints Sunday in many churches. You know, the day when we celebrate the great heroes and heroines from our past. And so I want to ask you a question ... raise your hand:

*“Who wants to be a saint?”*

I think I raised my hand higher than the rest of you. So much for learning to be humble from the tax collector two weeks ago.

Anyway, I always thought I wanted to be a saint. Honored and revered for who I am and how I live my life.

But then I read the Bible passage for today. The one that describes saints not from a human perspective, but from the perspective of God, the Mystery.

*“Blessed are you who are poor. Blessed are you who mourn. Blessed are you who are hated.”*

Oops!!!

You know that hand I raised up so high?! Well, it's shrinking faster than a wool sweater washed in boiling water and dried in a pizza oven!

This isn't the image of a saint I had.

You know, I can't remember the last time I drove by a person standing on a street corner begging for food or money, and then praying to God, "Thank you for showing me a saint today!"

And isn't faith supposed to make us laugh in the face of death, rather than mourn?

And since Jesus is so well loved and admired, shouldn't walking in his footsteps cause me to be loved and admired, rather than hated? Though I'm not really sure how we came up with that last one when the central symbol of our faith is a cross.

Anyway, I don't think I want to be a saint anymore.

I'd rather be full than hungry. I'd rather be laughing than crying. And I'd certainly rather be rich than poor.

And if I've learned anything from our present-day politicians, it's that if someone strikes you on the cheek, hit them back twice as hard. And then you can be elected and have 90% support from the evangelical community.

After all, "Vengeance is mine," says the Lord, and it's up to us to do God's work here on earth, right? So let's get the vengeance started!

Such is the state of American Christianity. But I don't even think we should use the term 'American Christianity' anymore. I think we should use the term 'Christian Americanism,' because we have become an **adjective** to our cultural ways, rather than an **alternative**.

Don't believe me. Let's read Luke's beatitudes again:

*"Blessed are you who are poor.*

*Blessed are you who mourn.*

*Blessed are you who are hated."*

Do these sound like American values or American Christian values to you? We'd rather be all the things Jesus warns us about.

Sooooo ... "Who wants to be a saint" based on biblical values?

Definitely not me. They are losers. By any definition. LOSERS. And not just losers who are trying to hide their LOSERness. They are openly proclaiming it.

Blessed are the beggars.

Blessed are those who cry out loud, "For cryin' out loud!"

Blessed are those who face public ridicule and persecution.

I would be so much happier if they took their LOSERness and hid it away, like I've spent my whole life doing. I'm so glad I'm not like them.

Oops! I guess the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector still has legs.

You know, maybe I can find some comfort in the fact that Jesus is standing apart from them and blessing them. Maybe that's my out. Maybe as I drive by those people on the street corner I can stand apart from them and say, "Bless you. God has blessed you."

But here's the thing. This won't be the last time Jesus brings up the poor, the hungry, and the hurting.

The beatitudes are at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, in both Matthew and Luke's versions. But Jesus also brings them up at the end of his ministry. No, not the end of his 'earthly' ministry, but at his 'end of time' ministry.

Jesus describes a scenario on Judgement Day, which I can only assume must mean he thinks what he has to say is rather important.

And on that Day, he doesn't say the hungry are blessed, he says, *"I was hungry."*

And *"I am the one who mourns and languishes in prison."*

And *"I am the stranger in your midst."*

*"I am the beggar, Lazarus, at your rich country's border. Only wanting the crumbs that fall from your table."*

Jesus doesn't just bless the losers. He becomes one. Even to the point of the cross.

And now I don't know where to turn. Because not only are losers being blessed, but Jesus has become a loser.

And if I am to become a disciple of his, or if Jesus is to live in me, then I must embrace the loser in me. The beggar in me. I must confront the deep pain of my life that makes me weep, not over the world, but over myself.

And on one hand, that is incredibly terrifying. But on the other, it is terribly freeing.

Freeing from all the masks I wear on a daily basis. Like that of the strong Christian. Impervious to the ways of the world. Standing above and beyond it all.

Which is the common way we view the saints here on All Saints Day.

But this passage makes me rethink it all. Why, it actually forces me to take off my masks to listen more closely to his words. And maybe that strong, invulnerable Christian mask I wear to hide my pain and brokenness ... well, maybe Jesus is giving me the freedom to take it off, and live an authentic life for once.

You know, I can't help but wonder if the field Jesus spoke these words in didn't look like the day after Halloween, with all the discarded masks we put on every day to look strong and invulnerable.

You know, I wish Jesus was just talking about 'THEM' when he talks about the poor and those who mourn and the rest of them. But he isn't. He is talking about all of us. Something I have been slow to realize, but that isn't anything new.

As many of you know, a few years ago I helped out and often attended a group called "Community of the Wild Goose," who met on Sunday mornings. It was a gathering of people who are mostly recovering addicts and alcoholics, or families and friends of them.

Now, I was told early on that people in recovery do not refer to themselves as "Recovered" addicts, but as "Recovering" addicts. In other words, they are constantly in the state of 'recovering.' And they can never say, "Finally, I've made it."

And when I first started attending there, I didn't think I had much in common with them. But as I listened to Henry Rojas, the leader of the group, I began to see myself in so many of the things he was saying.

And one Sunday, it finally dawned on me: "I'm an addict. Only I'm addicted to socially acceptable things. Things like money, the status quo, and prestige." I'm addicted to avoiding being seen as weak. As a LOSER.

And then I realized that the only difference between those addicts and me was while they were 'recovering addicts' ... I was an 'uncovering addict.'

Henry, like the bible, was and is continually 'uncovering' the addictions of my life. And it is absolutely terrifying. And absolutely freeing. All at the same time.

Just like the beatitudes.

And now I am starting to see things in a different light. That I am the addict, and the addict is me. That I am the hungry, and the hungry are me. That I am the one who feels out of place, displaced, in this world, and those on the border are me. Longing to belong.

You know maybe, finally, I am beginning to see the Christ in them and the Christ in me.

Because according to Jesus, this is where my sainthood is located. In my brokenness.

AND HIS AS WELL!

In the night in which he was betrayed ... by Judas or by me?

In the night in which he was denied ... by Peter or by me?

In the night he was abandoned ... by the rest or by me?

In THAT night, Jesus connected his brokenness to our brokenness. He became one with us in brokenness. He became one with us in our saintliness of brokenness.

And so, in this meal where broken meets broken, we experience the communion of saints.

**Amen.**

## **Spirit in the Desert**

### **Opening Songs**

#### **Be Still**

(London Fox Taize Choir)

Be Still, know that I am God

#### **You Lord Are In This Place**

(Keith Duke)

You Lord are in 1)...this place.  
2)...my heart. 3)...my mind. 4)...my life.  
Your presence fills it.  
Your presence is peace.

### **Bible Passage**

*(A passage takes us from one place to another)*

### **Touchpoint**

*(Where God's story touches our life story)*

#### **Lead Me, Lord**

(Discovery Singers)

Lead me, Lord. Lead me in thy righteousness. Make thy way plain before my face. For it is thou, Lord, thou Lord only, that makest me to dwell in safety.

### **The Meal**

#### **The Lord's Prayer**

(Taize Reflections)

### **Benediction**

#### **The Lord Bless You and Keep You**

(National Lutheran Choir, Peter C. Lukin)

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you. To shine upon you and be gracious unto you. The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you. And give you peace....