

Related topics

For further study:

Saints; eschatology; kingdom of God; soteriology

Closing Prayer

Almighty God,
you have knit together your elect
in one communion and fellowship
in the mystical body of your Son Christ our Lord:
grant us grace so to follow your blessed saints
in all virtuous and godly living
that we may come to those inexpressible joys
that you have prepared for those who truly love you;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Common Worship · All Saints' Day³

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³ From the 1549 *Book of Common Prayer*, possibly influenced by a prayer in the *Leonine Sacramentary*.

All Saints' Day

1 November, or Sunday between 30 October and 5 November inclusive

Principal Service readings

Revelation 7.9-17

The rewarding of the saints

Psalms 34.1-10

Praise the Lord and seek him

1 John 3.1-3

God's love in letting us be called his children

Matthew 5.1-12

The Beatitudes

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
speak to our hearts in the stillness,
keep us steadfast in the foundation that cannot be shaken,
lift up our eyes to behold the vision of your glory;
and perfect our faith, now and always. Amen.

Society of Saint Francis

Gospel Reading

The Beatitudes

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. ²Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

³Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

⁵Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

⁶Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

⁷Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

⁸Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

⁹Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

¹⁰Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹²Rejoice and be glad, for your reward

is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Matthew 5.1-12 NRSV¹

Comments and Questions

Going up a mountain is perhaps not the most obvious thing to do in our culture if you want to give a lecture or preach a sermon, but this is what Jesus does. In Exodus, God called Moses to ascend Mount Sinai to receive the law. Mount Sinai is wrapped in smoke, and the whole mountain trembled with the presence of God and the thunder of his voice. God summoned Moses, who was told that no one else should attend, with the exception of Aaron (Exodus 19.16-25).

Matthew tells us that Jesus went up the mountain, and that his disciples left the crowds and followed him. He may have been heard by others, but it is the disciples he addresses specifically. Bonhoeffer suggests that with the disciples' movement to join Jesus we can glimpse the tension that develops throughout Matthew's gospel between the disciples and the crowd. The disciples and the crowd belong together, but Jesus will send his disciples out to the people.

It has been suggested that the sermon is law, meant to push us to recognise our need for forgiveness. The sermon's hard sayings are very challenging, and this has made some commentators think they should be considered as an ideal that Christians might try to achieve. But seeing them in purely individualistic and pietistic terms is quite a weak way of looking at the Beatitudes. Rather than seeing them as ethical principles we should see them, according to Hauerwas, as revealing something about the nature of the Messiah, who is making the reality of a new age possible in time. The sermon is not a list of requirements, but rather the description of the life of a people gathered by and around Jesus. The Beatitudes are not recommendations. No one is asked to go out and try to be poor in spirit or to mourn or be meek. 'Rather, Jesus is indicating that given the reality of the kingdom we should not be

¹ *New Revised Standard Version Bible* is copyright © 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

surprised to find among those who follow him those who are poor in spirit, those who mourn, those who are meek' (Hauerwas, 2006, p.61).²

Quotations

1

The Sermon on the Mount is the word of the one who did not relate to reality as a foreigner, a reformer, a fanatic, the founder of a religion, but as the one who bore and experienced the nature of reality in his own body, who spoke out of the depth of reality as no other human being on earth ever before. The Sermon on the Mount is the word of the very one who is the lord and law of reality. The Sermon on the Mount is to be understood and interpreted as the word of God who became human. That is the issue at stake when the question of historical action is raised, and here it must prove true that action in accord with Christ is action in accord with reality.

Action in accord with Christ does not originate in some ethical principle, but in the very person of Jesus Christ.

Ethics / Dietrich Bonhoeffer. - Tr. Reinhard Krauss. - Minneapolis : Fortress Press, 2005. - p.231

2

Our only hope of living as the community of the Sermon is to acknowledge that we do not retaliate, hate, curse, lust, divorce, swear, brag, preen, worry, or backbite because it is not in the nature of our God or our destination that we should be such a people. When we as individuals fail in these instances, we do not snatch up cheap forgiveness, but we do remember that the ecclesial is larger than the sum of our individual failures and that it is pointed in a direction that will carry us away from them.

'The Sermon on the Mount as Radical Pastoral Care', by Richard Lischer. *Interpretation* 41 p.161-162

² *Matthew* / Stanley Hauerwas. - London : SCM Press, 2006. - (SCM Theological Commentary on the Bible). - 978-0-334-04111-5