

All Saints Day

November 2, 2025



PROCLAMATION POINTS

The following are some thoughts and questions to be used for a text study on the weekly lessons, or for jump-starting the imagination of the preacher and hearer in preparing for the proclamation event.

Therefore be bodily and outwardly poor or rich, as may be your lot, God does not ask about that; and he knows that every one must be before God, that is spiritually and in his heart, poor; that is, not to place his confidence, comfort and assurance in temporal possessions, nor fix his heart upon them and make mammon his idol.

– Martin Luther–

Sermon on the Beatitudes

Revelation 7:(2-8) 9-17

The description of those who will surround the throne of the Lamb is either comforting or terrifying, depending on where the reader finds themselves. The notion of 144,000 who are sealed suggests that the number of elect is frighteningly small. Perhaps when the church was only a generation and a half old this word was a source of comfort, but 2000 years later it has quite a different sound.

John goes on to speak of a great multitude that no one can count. In contrast to the 144,000 who are sealed, the throne of the Lamb of God is surrounded by a great mass of saints from every tribe and nation. These two views are not, necessarily, incompatible. The precise count in the first part of the passage serves as a reminder that God knows his elect. There are none who are not accounted for. At the same time, this Lamb came into the world for the salvation of many, not just a few.

- *How do you react to the notion of 144,000 who are sealed? Is this a word of comfort? Do you think it is intended to be taken as a literal headcount of the elect?*

The hosts arrayed in white who surround the throne have come through the darkness of this fallen world. They have experienced suffering and sorrow for the sake of the Lamb. But in this new kingdom John describes, they are comforted. Their suffering is ended. The blood of the Lamb has washed them clean. The darkness of this world is behind them and they live in the shelter and safety of their shepherd.

- *How is this image of the new kingdom a source of hope for us still living in the darkness of this world?*

Psalms 149

The psalmist offers an uplifting word about God's relationship with his chosen ones. The people are called to sing a new song. God's wrath has ended. A new word of peace, of joy, is in order. God's glory is being revealed and it is revealed in the pleasure he takes in his chosen ones. His faithful ones are being crowned with victory. This is not good news for those opposed to God. They are about to see God's vengeance. The salvation God is bringing into the world is being brought to his chosen ones. God's blessings and mercy are selectively applied, and God does the selecting.

- *Do you prefer a picture of God's salvation that is more universal in its scope? How does God's Word have a universal invitation, even though not all people will respond?*
- *What are the implications of God blessing his chosen ones and punishing his enemies? Where are we in that picture?*

1 John 3:1-3

It is no small thing for someone to refer to us as their child. Yet that is precisely what the Father has done. He has called us his children. What is remarkable about this is that God's power is such that whatever he calls us, that is what we are. If he calls us his children, we are his children. This makes us strangers in this world. Since this world is opposed to God, and does not know him, his children are never truly at home here. But he is preparing for us something not yet revealed to us, a world in which we will finally see our Lord as he really is, rather than as we imagine him.

- *What are some ways that Christians are out of step or not fully at home in this world? Do you believe we will feel completely at home in eternity? Why or why not?*
- *Are we called to separate from this world, or not? How do we manage being in the world but not of the world?*

Matthew 5:1-12

Despite our best intentions and our grounding in the Gospel, the beatitudes present us with difficulties. We struggle to take them for what they are. We can't help but see in them a project, an assignment. We see that the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, the hungry and thirsty, the merciful, the pure, the peacemakers, the persecuted are blessed and we, almost automatically, aspire to be like them.

The most common use of blessing in our culture is in response to someone sneezing. Reflexively we say, "God bless you," without much thought to what we are saying. But rarely do we think, in response to that exchange, "Well, I should sneeze too, so that I can get a blessing." But that's what we do with the Beatitudes.

Imagine if, instead, we simply received these words as the blessings they are. These are words of comfort and hope, words of promise to us when, or if, we find ourselves in such circumstances. And the realities of life are such that there is little chance we will escape this world without finding ourselves in one or more of these circumstances. Into the midst of those very things the world sees as cursed, Christ Jesus comes to us with a blessing. He promises a future reward that will leave all this darkness behind.

- *Why doesn't God bless us by putting an end to poverty, mourning, hunger, etc? Why bless what the world sees as cursed?*