

Call Me Blessed Matt 5:3 and 1 John 3:1-3

Let me take a few minutes to set the stage for us to listen to our wonderful guests this morning, from TLP, by lifting a bit of scripture. John is the author of this epistle and we have pulled a small piece of it –

It's rather “an emotional aside” for the epistle writer: amazed over what God has already given, more moved by what is to come. The opening verb, “See,” is strong, more like “Look!” or “Behold!”. Tells us something important is going on, it is a way to garner our attention, don't you think?

Some translations vary, but the notion is that visibility must matter in this life and the next; that God's love must be tangible, viewable — in Christ, and in the life of the Body, this Body for example, as gathered people. We are to make God's love known through our living.

The second word, “what,” which, according to theologian Raymond Brown, expresses “both quality and quantity, thus, how much love, and what amazing love.” So, this overwhelmingly endless love of such quantity, brings us together, here and all the moments to follow; so does God's love makes us united even in our differences? We are spiritually washed with water in our baptism, and daily through prayer in our repentance, to believe deeply and really, in this hope-filled love and then to hold it tenderly; because, *and this is really important*, when we see him we shall be like him, that is how we will know who he is and who we are to him. Wow.... Just praise God and wow.

And is that not exactly what we pray for in our loved ones that have gone before us, on All Saint's Sunday? Don't we take great comfort to believe that this is what our parents, relatives, friends and all who have gone before, have experienced?

And in this hope-filled thought, let us turn to our other scripture – just this one piece of the beatitudes from Jesus sermon on the mountain. He looked at the people who had stopped whatever it was they were doing, to sit on the rocky hillside in the sun drenched day he was there, to listen to this gentle soul for a little while. What would your expectation be if you were hungry, or downtrod, or alone in this world and in that crowd? Would you say, could he heal me? Would he feed us? Will he fix this mess so that we could just live and not feel the sting of the Roman whip or boot? Maybe he is just a good preacher and it is a lovely day to hear a good message... it is something very different if nothing else...

And Jesus looked at them and said many things – but he saw them in their need, and said: blessed are the poor in spirit... what enormous compassion he had...

The Beatitudes aren't commandments: go be poor in spirit, and then go be merciful and make peace, too. Jesus looked out at a bunch of simple folks, no means, hand to mouth survivors, who felt oppressed, not blessed. This messianic one blessed them. Did not pass the hat for donations or seek to take anything – but to give spiritual sustainance.

It's a stunning moment; they must have been baffled and delighted. Blessed are the poor in spirit... Blessed are those who mourn? Blessed are the persecuted? We think of blessings as comforts, success — but in

Jesus' upside down world, things are inverted, and for this we should give thanks to God. And I think just one more thing before we have our speakers come forward – blessed are those poor in spirit they may be – but I say, also, made of something like spiritual steel to come to TLP and say, I would like to learn how to read better, or at all, or I come forward humbly and with a bit of joy, and I need, I have this need, can you help me? I have this need because this language after my huge journey from my homeland where I had to leave because...all their own reasons. I have this need because HS did not really cut it for me and my literacy skills are really lacking... Blessed are the poor in spirit because they keep going, seeking, trying, just like sitting in front of Jesus that day on the rocks on the hill in the sun, and so the gospel writer made a record of it that it should not be forgotten. And please do not think *Jesus glamorizes poverty. But the spiritual advantage, the humility, available space, sounds like hope. Richard Rohr (in [Jesus' Plan for a New World](#)): "Jesus praises the weeping class, those who can enter into solidarity with the pain of the world and not try to extract themselves from it. That is why Jesus says the rich man can't see the Kingdom. The rich one spends life trying to make tears unnecessary and, ultimately, impossible..."* so we move through all of it, together....

Blessed are we today for the possibilities and a chance to hear from Grace, and ...xxxxx from Tompkins Learning Partners.