

**Blessed are They**  
**All Saints Day, 2020**

Matthew 5:1-12

Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them. He said: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Steve Clary just sang for us "Shall We Gather at the River," a song that is traditionally sung here as we light the candles in memory of those we loved, like Steve's mother Janet. It expresses a hope that we shall see one another, just beyond the river that separates us from those who've crossed over.

We cannot fathom their existence  
their form and nature,  
but envision them in a blessed state,

*from John at Patmos: Revelation 21:*

*<sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among mortals. They will be God's people, and God's own self will be with them and be their God. <sup>4</sup> God will wipe every tear from their eyes. ,Death will be no more, mourning or crying or pain no more."*

How blessed are they!

But how about us, here and now  
who miss them?  
Jan Richardson says,  
*when our heart is held by someone in eternity,  
we do not live only in this world.*

Kate Bowler has a podcast, "Everything Happens"  
and tells the story of when she was 19  
and volunteered after a flood  
in her friends' neighborhood.  
She was helping out at a house where  
everything was waterlogged.

*I was cleaning out this yard, throwing clothes and headboards, and old  
board games into a dumpster,  
and I reached for this tricycle  
and everyone around me all at once yelled.  
No, no, no, no, not that.  
My first thought was:  
But this neighbor doesn't have a kid.  
I knew he lived alone.*

*But my friends said quietly,  
Oh, no, that's Chris's tricycle. They lost him when he was four.  
And the man said to me,  
Yes, I'm sorry. I'll need to keep that.  
I will become a lot of things,  
but I need to remember that I was that kid's dad.*

On where floods of various kinds keep coming  
and take things away,  
health, relationships, work, income,  
we can lose the landmarks of who we are  
this father remembered the blessedness  
of being a father.  
and held it fast.

Jesus said:

*Blessed are those who mourn,  
and their blessing  
is not that they shall not grieve  
but they shall be ministered to,*

*Blessed are the poor in spirit  
for God's kingdom is theirs.  
weighed down by the world?  
God identifies with you  
and says, you belong to my kingdom.*

*Over and over we hear from him  
we see in him that our blessedness  
is not revealed in our good fortune,  
but in the problems of everyday life  
as well as devastation and utter loss,  
Jan says: "blessings emerge from those experiences  
and speak to them"*

*The dim light that breaks into the darkness,  
the balm that is friendship  
the river that is grace, all reassure us  
despite our disbelief, that God is present with us.*

*Jan says:*

*Blessings come that help us perceive the grace  
that threads through our lives. That assures us  
even when we have a hard time believing it*

*You're not denying anything that has transpired. '  
but you are taking the pieces of the broken heart  
and sitting with them and waiting to see  
what the spirit is going to create with the pieces,  
knowing that it will never be the same.*

So here we are,  
on the cusp of a momentous election,  
in the throws of a pandemic  
and an economic upending.  
We are mourning and worried  
and wondering if we dare hope.

Life's precariousness and fragility  
and unpredictability overwhelm.

Yet there is this sense that if we stay alive  
and awake,  
that thread of grace  
will keep emerging  
in the warp and weave and muck of our lives.

That we, like they, on the other side of the river  
who hold our hearts,  
are blessed  
That even our shattered hearts  
are whole.  
and we can sing  
even through our tears,  
*Glory, glory, glory.*

*Rev. Patricia Wagner*  
*Maple Grove UMC*