**BLESSED ARE THE MEEK (ALL SAINTS DAY)**

In today’s gospel message we have something very familiar: the Beatitudes. It is one of the most familiar passages in the Bible. Blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are those who mourn, blessed are the meek; these are phrases well known to us. Is it surprising that these words and phrases mark the first speaking engagement of Jesus. Although this passage appears in the fifth chapter of Matthew’s Gospel, this is the first real speaking lesson from Jesus. From the build-up in the first four chapters, are we a bit surprised by this sermon on the Mount? What we have learned in the first four chapters of Matthew might have us expecting something different from this long- awaited Messiah. We know that he came from the lineage of the mighty King David. We know that wise men from the East came to worship him after his birth and that Herod so feared this child born to Mary, that he gave orders to kill all the boys under two years of age in the area of Bethlehem. We know that John the Baptist prepared a way for this Messiah by preaching in the wilderness. He spoke of Jesus in these words: “…after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” Allen Hilton, Minister of Faith and Learning at the Wayzata Community Church in Wayzata, Minnesota puts it this way “By the time Jesus shows up in this Gospel, then, the narrator has raised anticipation to a fever pitch, and the attentive audience has a clear expectation: this Messiah will be a potent cross between David and Elijah. He will roll Roman heads and/or bring down God’s fire on sinners. As if all that fanfare weren’t enough, in his first public appearance, this David-Elijah character climbs, Moses-like, up a mountain to hold forth. Power! What words will he speak? Every neck is craned, every ear tilted to hear.” Then we hear: “Blessed are the poor in Spirit…blessed are those who morn…blessed are the meek…blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness…blessed are the merciful…blessed are the pure in heart…blessed are the peacemakers…blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake….blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Where is this Messiah with the winnowing fork who is burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire? Meek and merciful peacemakers? Is that what God wants?

Let me ask you another question. What do these persons have in common: Mother Teresa, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Desmond Tutu, Nelson Mandela, Jimmy Carter, and Malala Yousafzai? They are all winners of the Nobel Peace Prize. Dr. King won his in 1964, for being the first person in the Western world to have shown us that a struggle can be waged without violence. Mother Teresa won hers in 1979 in recognition of her work in bringing help to suffering humanity. Bishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa won in 1984 as a unifying leader figure in the campaign to resolve the problem of [apartheid](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apartheid) in South Africa, the non-violent struggle for liberation in which black and white South Africans united to bring their country out of conflict and crisis. Nelson Mandela won in 1993, along with Frederik Willem de Klerk, for their work for the peaceful termination of the [apartheid](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apartheid) regime, and for laying the foundations for a new democratic South Africa. President Jimmy Carter won the prize in 2002 for his decades of untiring effort to find peaceful solutions to international conflicts, to advance democracy and human rights, and to promote economic and social development. Malala Yousafzai was awarded the prize in 2014 for her struggle against the suppression of children and young people and for the right of all children to education.

If we look at the Beatitudes listed in our Gospel lesson, these 6 people, who have lived and been honored in our lifetime for their efforts at World Peace, highlight the attributes that Jesus was extolling on the Mount. To be Poor in Spirit is to be humble, to be meek is to be humbly patient. These 6 people are humble, merciful and pure in heart. They have mourned, they have hungered and thirsted for righteousness, they have been reviled and persecuted. Jesus laid out these attributes to show us what the kingdom of God is like, what God is like and what we can aspire to be, as part of the kingdom of God.

I think it is appropriate to consider these 6 people today, All Saints Day, as we commemorate all of the Saints, living and those who have gone before us. They are examples, as Jesus was, of how God expects us to conduct our lives here on earth, so that we all can be a part of God’s kingdom, God’s Communion of Saints. They have lived the Beatitudes. I think they have answered my first question: Meek and merciful peacemakers, is that what God wants? I believe the answer is yes. May it be so.