

## ***True Happiness***

All Saints Sunday, Year B ~ Matthew 5:1-12

Welborne UMC ~ November 5, 2017

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How do we define happiness?

In some ways, that's the bottom line question from our scripture today. This excerpt from Jesus' longer Sermon on the Mount is called The Beatitudes. Jesus offers a series of statements, arguing that people are blessed, or happy, when they act certain ways. Only...those certain ways are a little opposite of how we think about being happy or blessed. We can live with people who are happy being humble, pure in heart and peacemakers. But really? People who grieve are happy? People who are meek are happy? People who are persecuted are happy? That's not what the world thinks of as "happy."

Jesus is not encouraging different kinds of behavior here. He is not saying that if we want true happiness, we need to go mourn, or go get harassed. If Jesus isn't telling us how to behave here, then what is he doing? Jesus is describing what it looks like when we are Kingdom people. When Kingdom people grieve, they will be made glad. When we grieve, as those who believe in the salvation of Christ, we know that grief is not the last word. When Kingdom people are hungry and thirsty for righteousness and really live and fight for it—they will begin to see it in their lives and in the world. If we are Kingdom people then whether we are in times of joy or in times of trouble, we will know the happiness that comes from being a follower of Jesus. It isn't a surface happiness that closes its eyes to the deep pain of the world. It is a happiness that comes when we can stand in the midst of that pain knowing that God is with us, even here.

In the Beatitudes, Jesus is "inviting us to imagine what it is like to live in the Kingdom of God," as one author puts it.<sup>1</sup> Life in the Kingdom of God is not like life in the Kingdom of Self, which is a distinction we've mentioned the past several weeks when we've talked about generosity. Life in the kingdom of God is oriented outward—not inward.

As we celebrate All Saints Sunday today and we remember those in the last year who have died, as well as those who have shaped our own faith, I suspect that what we will find are memories of people whose lives were outward oriented. What we remember is not what they thought of themselves, how they took pride in themselves—what we remember is how they shaped others. We remember the ways they offered comfort, served the way of Christ, and shared kindness.

This morning we have the gift and the responsibility of sharing in the baptism of Matthew Chantrell. Matthew's parents will make promises on Matthew's behalf, and we will affirm those promises in our lives, the same promises made at our baptisms. And we will

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.davidlose.net/2017/11/all-saints-a-preaching-a-beatitudes-inversion/>

promise to support them, and to live as saints for Matthew. Now we won't literally say we will be Matthew's Saints. We won't literally say that on an All Saints Sunday some 40 years in the future, we hope Matthew will name us as his saints. But that is what our words mean. Because when we promise to live according to Christ's example and surround Matthew with a community of love and forgiveness—well, we are promising to live like Jesus's definition of happy. We are promising to celebrate with him today and walk through the hard stuff with him tomorrow. We are promising to be his saints.

It's kind of a weighty thing, isn't it friends? But if you think about your own saints, the people you know who lived as true disciples and modeled faith for you, I think you find that they are people just like us. People who tried their best to follow Jesus even when times were worst. People who knew that true happiness is not something we find on the surface—it is something we cultivate deep within our hearts.

True Happiness. May we know it. May we live it. Along with all the saints. Amen.