

## DEVOTIONS, NOVEMBER 2, 2020

Pr. Julianne D. Smith, Director for Evangelical Mission/Asst. to the Bishop

### Matthew 5:1-12

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

“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 receive 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 for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. “Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.



*Whenever I hear these words, I am taken back to my childhood congregation, with our pastor reading them and being fascinated by how he pronounced ‘blessed.’ Bless’-ed. I don’t know if this was the general practice or if it was his way of emphasizing the importance of this word. Bless’-ed. Most people tend to say it this way as they read Matthew, but I have heard others ignore the emphasis.*

*For me, however, this emphasis on the word blessed is a reminder that this isn’t just any type of blessing. This isn’t like the “bless you” after a sneeze, or the “bless your heart” from the South. This is a blessing directly from God that is intended to envelop us in all that is holy and good. I was once told it had a sense of bliss about it. Forty years ago, Robert Schuller wrote a book entitled “The Be-Happy Attitudes,” which did not win rave reviews among Lutherans. We prefer our “bless’-eds”, thank you very much. ‘Happy’ just sounds too mundane.*

*Interestingly, nearly four years ago this passage was scheduled to be read shortly after the president’s inauguration. I remember hearing that a number of bishops received complaints from parishioners that their pastors had purposely chosen that passage as a political statement. Uh, no, it’s the prescribed reading for the Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany in series A. Many people were caught up by the social justice implications rather than the blessings being offered. And what does it mean that folks were bothered by this passage? (That might be a sermon for another time.)*

*Of course, the blessings are tied to our relationships with those around us. Who are the poor in spirit? To whom are we to show mercy? Who needs to be comforted, etc.? As Christians we are called to reveal God’s blessings to those in need; and we are also to be assured that they come to us as well. Our relationship with Christ blesses us to be a blessing to those with whom we relate.*

*We are bless’-ed! And we are called to let others know they are bless’-ed too.*

*Go in peace and share this good news!*