

Megan Floyd

Year B – All Saints Sunday – November 3, 2024

Luke 6:20-31

Grace and peace to you from God and the Holy Spirit, and from Jesus Christ, who calls us into holy living for the sake of the world. Amen.

We are gathered here today on All Saints' Sunday... the day the Church sets aside to remember those we have loved and cared for, who have died during the past year.

We gather to celebrate them... even though it may stir up the grief within us... we know... that our grief honors their place in the story of our lives...

And we take comfort in the promise that our dear ones are resting in the embrace of our Lord.

We, as a community of faith, trust in the Good News that Jesus has defeated death... so that death is no longer the end...

And we trust in the Good News... that we are a forgiven people, called and claimed by God and redeemed through God's love.

We trust this Good News... this promise for us as disciples... as followers of Christ... because we know that God's enduring faithfulness is forever and ever, Amen.

And yet we know... that while the goodness that God offers is free to all people... we know that being a disciple... a follower of Christ... still comes with a cost.

The cost of discipleship... is that it must change your life... it must change how you live... how you love... how you treat others, especially the poor and hungry.

The cost of discipleship is that it transforms your whole being... when you allow your life to become one with the life of Christ...

It's not a change that we make *so that we can receive* the promised goodness of God... those promises are already ours.

It's a change that comes in response to what Jesus offers when we take seriously what he calls us to do...

It's not easy... this life of discipleship... which is why we need God's grace and forgiveness every day.

It's not easy... but this life of following Christ... this challenging and difficult life... this holy and beautiful life... this is the life that Jesus calls us into.

Because this kind of life... this way of living... is what brings closer the kingdom of God and allows us to be co-creators *with* God in the ever-unfolding new creation.

We hear this call today into a holy and loving, yet challenging and difficult way of life...

We hear it in the blessings and woes... and in the call to love those who are against us, and to turn the other cheek.

And these words from Jesus today might make us uncomfortable... and that's ok!

My friends... the truth is, if the Gospel of Jesus doesn't make you uncomfortable, at least sometimes, then you aren't reading it closely enough!

I know these words make me uncomfortable... but I know that they are still Good News, and so I stick with them because I trust Jesus.

Presiding Bishop Curry once said that Jesus is always on the side of the poor and oppressed, and so whenever we read scripture, we should strive to hear it from their perspective...

because when we do... we can't help but to hear Christ's words as Good News.

And what sounds like Good News for only the poor... and only those who are persecuted... really is Good News for *all* people.

This way of life that Jesus calls us into, for both the rich and the poor, calls us into lives of equality, dignity, and love...

It disrupts the social hierarchy that those on top cling to with fervor, and it demands that they fully recognize the inherent value and worth of all human life... but again... especially the lives of those who are on the margins.

This way of life calls us to overthrow systems that depend on the suffering and struggle of many to support the few...

And Jesus is not preaching about theoretical concepts... he is calling us to recognize the real human lives of those around us who are hurting... and to understand that we are connected.

This way of life... this life of discipleship... it calls us to be accountable for our actions... it shines a loving light onto our sin, so that we might repent, and be reconciled with those we have harmed.

Listen... We know that Christ lives in us, and so when we honor the light of our God that is present in *all* people... then working to repair broken relationships also reconciles us back to God... and puts us back into right relationship.

And I know that I want to be right with God, and I'm sure you do, too. This really is Good News for all people!

Jesus calls for a reversal of the usual way of responding... and instead calls us to the more difficult path of making room for repentance, forgiveness... and reconciliation.

This is most certainly... Good News! ...it's so good, and so important, that it actually comes up multiple times in our lectionary.

During our Bible Study this week, I thought I was having déjà vu, until I realized that I preached on this same text about loving our enemies and turning the other cheek back in Epiphany, on February 23...

But for today... we are hearing this call into a loving, yet difficult way of living... under the shroud of All Saints' Day...

And, given the day... these seem to be a strange selection of readings to hear as we remember our loved ones.

Except that this Good News... is not only good for all people *living*... it is good news for those we have loved and lost.

Because this difficult life that Jesus calls us into is full of grace and forgiveness, and it is marked by the ever-present opportunity to turn back...

to hold each other accountable... in loving and non-violent ways, for the purpose of healing the relationship and restoring the community.

...and it is marked by the continual invitation to be reconciled with God. And I believe God will succeed in God's promise to reconcile all of creation.

Because God's desire for us, more than anything... is that we get this right... because love... is so very important.

This life that Jesus calls us to... this holy and beautiful, challenging and difficult... life of discipleship... is so important, because it is a foretaste of the kingdom to come.

And the joy that we have as disciples... is that we get to live in this glory now... and celebrate all the ways that God's love shines through us.

And so, as I hear these words from Jesus today, I know that God's desire for us to be reconciled in this life is also... only a foretaste of the full reconciliation with God that will come after we die.

After all... that is God's promise to us... for ourselves... and for those we love.

That death no longer has the final word... that we, who set our hope on Christ, are claimed and redeemed as beloved children of God, in this life and beyond,

...and that we will be raised anew with Christ on the last day.

And so, the hope and celebration of All Saints' Day lie in our trust that this life Jesus calls us into... this beautiful and difficult life, grounded in God's enduring promises of renewal...

...will be for the praise and glory of Christ now and always, forever and ever.
Amen.