

The Reverend Theo Robinson's Sermon for November 2, 2025
"Good times. Bad times. Blessings. Curses."
Luke 6:20-31

May only truth be spoken and may only truth be heard. Amen.

While originally of pagan origin, the Hallowtide Triduum has become a Christian tradition of a three-day observance that includes All Hallows' Eve, All Saints' Day, and All Souls' Day. All Hallows' Eve is celebrated on October 31 and is the first day of the triduum. It is a time for preparation and reflection on death, often including services and visits to cemeteries to prepare graves for All Saints' and All Souls' days. All Saints' Day is celebrated on November 1 and is a day to celebrate and honor all saints, martyrs, and the faithful departed who have lived holy lives. It is a time to celebrate the "mystical body of Christ" and the "company of all faithful people". All Souls' Day on November 2 is the final day of the triduum. It is a solemn observance for remembering and praying for all the faithful departed, especially relatives and loved ones. Traditions include visiting graves, lighting candles, and giving "soul cakes" to the poor in exchange for prayers for the dead.

From an Anglican perspective, the Hallowtide Triduum is a significant part of the Anglican liturgical calendar, often observed with specific services and a focus on the communion of saints. As with other traditions, it is seen as a time to reflect on the victory of Christ over sin and death and to contemplate our own mortality and eternal life. The commemoration of all faithful departed on November 2 is a key element, reinforcing the Anglican belief in the communion of saints and the church, both living and dead.

If you're asking yourself why we are celebrating All Saints' Day today then, when it's November 2, well, it's a complicated liturgical scheduling question that I'd be happy to answer to anyone interested at another time. Over time, as people stopped going to church on a daily basis, All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day have been merged into a single Sunday service that focuses on remembering those in the church who have died in the previous year while also celebrating the saints and martyrs of the church. It is an important occasion for remembering and celebrating the blessed of the church's story,

both ancient and contemporary, those known to us only by legend and history, as well as those known to us in this life.

The Gospel reading for today lays out the characteristics of the blessed alongside the characteristics of the lost. Good times. Bad times. Blessings. Curses. We feel and experience them all. It is with these images that we approach the gospel of Luke and his account of Jesus' beatitudes for today. We usually deal with the beatitudes from the Gospel of Matthew chapter 5 when we hear Jesus' sermon on the mount. Luke's version is slightly different in that it is shorter, and it is delivered on the plains. It is possible that this is the same sermon with Matthew and Luke remembering it or writing it differently. But it is more likely that Jesus gave this sermon more than once and in more than one place. The beatitudes are, after all, the foundation of a Christian's baptismal life, so is it hard to imagine that Jesus told them over and over again?

Luke's version of the beatitudes is quite a bit more literal than Matthew, less spiritual. In Luke, Jesus declares that the poor, the hungry, the lamenting, the hated, the excluded, and the defamed are to rejoice, for their suffering will be reversed and turned into plenty and joy. By contrast, the rich, the privileged, the prominent, and the comfortable will find themselves outside of the realm of God. On the surface, this passage seems quite controversial. If you are poor, you are blessed and if you are rich, you are cursed? If you're hungry, crying, hated, reviled, you are blessed? Full, happy, loved – cursed? You can see why this might be seen as controversial.

When reading the Gospel, you must consider Jesus' audience. To whom is he speaking? Sometimes we must guess or do some historic digging to figure it out. But if you back up a little to verse 17, Luke tells us straight-up who the audience is – his disciples and a great multitude of people. In Matthew, Jesus delivers his beatitudes from on top of a hill or mountain. In Luke, he comes down to eye level, to equal ground, with his disciples and gives them his blessings and curses, his woes and woes.

Jesus is not saying, as we are often tempted to read into this passage, that to be poor is to be blessed. He is not saying that to be hungry is to be blessed, or weeping, or hated. Jesus is speaking to his disciples who happen to be poor,

who happen to be hungry, who happen to be weeping, who happen to be hated. He is speaking to his disciples and helping them to figure out how to feel about being in this situation. He says, in verse 23, to rejoice in that day and to leap for joy. Jesus is telling his disciples that despite the fact that they are poor, hungry, sad, hated, reviled, because they have faith in God, they will be blessed with the rewards of heaven.

The reward promised to the first blessing is “yours is the Kingdom of God”. Blessed are you who are poor for yours is the Kingdom of God. What's the counterpart to that? “Woe to you who are rich for you have received your consolation.” Jesus says woe to you who are rich now because that's what you get. In your poverty, you are the beneficiaries of the Kingdom. Jesus is your king, and you are rightful heirs of all that the Kingdom of God is. All that the king can do for you, he is doing for you and for your good, right now, even in the midst of poverty and weeping and slander. So when Jesus says “woe to you who are rich”, he means what is your portion right now? Rich is you wanted, you got it, then in the end, that's it that's all. You have received your consolation, this is what you get, and that will be the end of it.

So what's my point here? The point is not that poverty and hunger and weeping and being hated are the way you become blessed, the means of blessing, the qualification you meet in order to get the blessing. That's not the point here. Jesus is not saying that if you want to be blessed, you better be poor. He is not saying if you want to be blessed, you better not have any food. He is not saying if you want to be blessed, you better be a weeper and not have any joy. He is not saying if you want to be blessed you better get yourself hated.

No, the point is many disciples are in fact poor, so how should you think about it? That yours is the Kingdom. Many disciples are in fact hungry, so how should you think about it? That you will someday get the reward of satisfaction. Many disciples are now weeping, and in all kinds of difficulties and pressures and afflictions. So how should you think about it? That day is coming when that's all going to pass, and you will laugh again.

And so, the point of this text is not to give us qualifications for how to receive the blessing of God. The point is that Jesus said “you are my disciples and

therefore you are blessed. You are following me, and you are trusting me. Therefore, whether you're poor, whether you're hungry, whether you're weeping, whether you're hated, you are blessed for all these reasons."

By all worldly standards, I am rich, full, and well-spoken of. I have a home, food in the cupboards, and people who care about me and love me. As I have listened to Christ and experienced God's love for all, I have learned that to be rich while others are poor is to not live in the promise of the kingdom of God. The consolation of self-contained riches is real but very limited, shallow, and fleeting. We all live in the house of God's love and grace. Our response to the "Woe" should not be paralyzing guilt but receiving the gift of being put on a new path. What a great adventure of grace to discover ways we can live in the promise of sharing God's abundance and knowing that God is always declaring "Blessed are you."

As I've previously said, there is nothing inherently wrong with living in abundance. It's what we do with that abundance that shows how we are blessed, and how we are living out God's kingdom today. Our reading today ends with a call to love our enemies, to "do to others as you would have them do to you." By sharing in our blessedness, we are living out God's command to love one another, including the radical call to love even our enemies. Today, on All Saints Sunday, we remember those saints across the centuries who have dared to love enemies, even at great personal cost.

Today as we remember the saints who have lived and heard the challenge to live like saints, the words of the Apostles' Creed ring true: we believe "in the communion of the saints." As the church of Christ, we have a purpose in this world to live for others with Christ-like love. Through God, we have inherited a promise to be reunited with our loved ones in death. As the body of Christ, we are called to seek Christ in everyone we meet. May God help us follow the example of Christ as we strive to live in unity and love through the power of the Spirit. Amen.