

All Saints Sunday

“RISE UP, O SAINTS OF GOD!”

Luke 6:20-31

All Saints Sunday

Analysis by Paige G. Evers

20 Then [Jesus] looked up at his disciples and said: “Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. 21 “Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled. “Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. 22 “Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. 23 Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets. 24 “But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. 25 “Woe to you who are full now, for you will be hungry. “Woe to you who are laughing now, for you will mourn and weep. 26 “Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets. 27 “But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. 29 If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also;

and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. 30 Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. 31 Do to others as you would have them do to you.”

DIAGNOSIS: Do I Really Want to be a Saint?

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) : *Give Me Cherubs, Please*

All Saints Sunday puts one in a heavenly frame of mind. I reflect on those who have died in my family of faith, especially during the past year. I expect to go to worship, sit back comfortably, and have the preacher paint a picture of everlasting life. So surely the woes Jesus declares in the gospel reading are not aimed at me. I'm not rich. I don't have everything I want, so I can't be considered full. I have had grief and hardship in my life, so I'm not constantly laughing. At the same time, I don't want to be lumped in with those who Jesus calls poor, hungry, or weeping, even if they are blessed. I can't decide where I fit. I go back to hoping the preacher will let me off the hook. Tell me a story about cherubs, harps, and saints and be done with it.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : *I Don't Really Want to be a Saint*

But there's still a nagging feeling. Even as I hope that the preacher will paint a picture of eternal life, my heart clings to life in this world. Its promises of blessedness, riches, fullness, laughter, and status are what I think about most. They are what I long for. Let the saints be the ones to bask in God's kingdom forever. I'll pursue my own blessings now.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) : *Not in Any Company*

Self-sufficiency does not lead to life in the company of saints. What I fail to realize as I sit comfortably in that pew, is that if I don't need God, if I willfully stand outside his mercy when he turns the world upside down, I will have received my consolation (v. 24). And while I might like to imagine that self-appointed sainthood is a possibility, God's judgment will show me otherwise. Outside God's kingdom, there is no

consolation at all.

PROGNOSIS: God Declares Me a Saint

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) : *An Undeserved Inheritance*

The passage from the letter to the Ephesians that corresponds to this gospel reading tells the good news of how God forgives my sins. He makes me a saint despite myself. Since God raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places (Eph. 1:20), I have obtained an inheritance. It is one that I do not deserve. But since Jesus became poor for me, to the point of being crucified, I am now, in God's eyes, considered rich. I have been "marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit" (Eph. 1:13). What's more, God has given me and all who believe "the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory" (Eph. 1:14).

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) : *A Realignment of the Heart*

Now that my identity rests in Christ and in what God has done for me through Christ's death and resurrection I, like Paul, can set my hope on Christ. I want to live to praise his glory (Eph. 1:12) instead of amassing the wealth, feasting, and laughter of this world.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) : *Listening, Serving, Blessing*

But I still live in this world. Here, God calls me to rise up and serve him. The first way to do that is to listen to Jesus' words (v. 27). He calls me to love my enemies, to pray for those who harm me, and, in short, to act in ways that the world does not expect (vv. 27-31). Why? First, because my neighbor needs me to. Second, because those ways of living proclaim God's mercy. Third, because through my service to others, God will continue

to draw sinners to himself. He can share more of the inheritance that comes through Christ alone. Through the power of the gospel, God can give them also the joy of life now and life eternal as his forgiven, beloved, and blessed saints.