

The Feast of All Saints

CINDERELLA: SOLD OUT, SOULED UP

Matthew 5:1-12

The Feast of All Saints

Analysis by Joseph Justus van der Sabb

1 When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. 2 Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

5 "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

9 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

10 "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 "Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Author's Note: The audience determines the message: the meek disciples might hear it one way, the pharisaic disciples might hear it completely differently. To hear it as good news, for you, you have to be in the right shoes. Question is: how can we get into these shoes....They're impossibly snug!

Many apologies to readers who may not be familiar with the European Folk-Tale of Cinderella on which this Sabbatheology builds: Cinderella, with her evil step-sisters, glass slipper and her rise from slavery in the literal ashes to marry the Prince, is perhaps one of the best known “Fairy Tales” we have in the West. For many in the West today, it certainly is better known than almost any Bible Story.

In this season of house to house visitations and elaborate Halloween costumes, I trust this Tale’s “shoes” will not have lost their traction for you today.

DIAGNOSIS: SOULLESS

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) : “*Them Ain’t My Shoes!*” (“*You want my foot to fit into that shoe?*”)

The Beatitudinal slipper arrives one sunny morning. We stand listening in doorways of relative wealth, opportunity, and power. “In one great deal, you too could get the Kingdom of God, mercy, and something to satisfy your hunger for righteousness! Wait, it gets better! Absolutely free, I’ll even throw in being a child of God and a claim on the entire inheritance of the earth! Sounds like a great deal? It is! The successful candidate will pay the low price of being poor in spirit, meek, persecuted, heart-broken, miserable, grief stricken, in pain, abused for doing good, reviled and falsely accused of all kinds of evil. You can even pay in daily installments for your whole life. Any takers?”

Eyeing our wealth and privilege, this product is an instant turn-off. “Well no, Mr. Prince, no one around here could ever be so ‘holy’ and ‘worthy’ [what we really mean is “worthless”] as to fit into that slipper you’re holding out. No, there is no one else in this house (i.e. if I’m not good enough for you, no one

else better be either!).”

Ladies? Let’s go shopping. His Highness’s visit has left me in need of some shopping therapy. No, not you, Cinderella, you can stay here and make yourself useful.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : *An Unwelcome Mile*

It turns out, however, that this slipper and its array of qualifications are the only way to get into the Palace. The Prince won’t let anyone near the fabulous parties at the Palace until he finds and marries the rightful owner of that slipper! It dawns on us how important it is that a foot is found that fits this glass slipper!

Forgetting the cost for a minute, the princess fantasy takes over. The only question that matters becomes: how can we clamber into the right shoes? Once in the mood, we expend every effort to self-righteously degrade ourselves and squeeze into the shoe-Cinderella’s step-sister style. But this fails and not only makes us ridiculous, but makes us angry at the Prince. Who is he to bring around a shoe that isn’t in my selfish size!? How dare he!

Petulant now, I am desperate to twist these Blessed words so that they pertain to me; I want to be in on what God’s up to. Child of God?

Shown mercy? Sounds awesome! But here’s the thing. I don’t want to pay the necessary / contingent cost. I don’t want to give up my project to make and sustain my own life. I don’t want to hand over the whole thing to Someone whom I’m not sure will handle it properly (the way I want it handled). After all, I saw firsthand how So-and-So died of cancer, So-and-So died in a car accident, So-and-So’s marriage fell apart, So-and-So committed suicide. Frankly, I don’t think being meek sounds like much fun. And I

just don't think being "persecuted" is where God wants me to be in this world. Shudder. Persecution is for those foreigner Christians and those missionary people. God is calling me to something else, right? To success. To winning. To happiness. To just being fabulous.

"Anyway, you know, I hunger and thirst for righteousness. who doesn't? And peacemaker? Yeah, that one's totally me! I keep my parents from yelling at my brother. I think I'm getting the hang of reading this pericope! I just read a line, think of a time I did something remotely like that, and Boom, the Blessed applies to me! Too easy! Have I been persecuted? Sure thing! Am I meek? Like no other! Do I hunger and thirst? For righteousness? Of course! For other things? Well, metaphorically speaking, I do. Which is totally what Jesus was doing. Yeah! I'm hungrier and thirstier than most people I know! I think I'm ready to try to wedge my toes into that slipper again!"

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) : *The Other Shoe Drops*
Glib blasphemy lingers sweetly, a poisoned seduction, flagrant and willful. If we ever grow out of these infantile delusions, or are battered to reality, we are cast into a vast wilderness. I am not, not ever, meek. Pure in heart? Don't even want to touch that one.

Merciful is just a tool I use to make myself look better to myself, when it's of use to me. Mercy for Wall Street? For Illegal Immigrants? Arabs? As if. What it boils down to is this: Jesus is blessing a whole group of people. But it's not me, not my group, not my caste, not my class. He's talking to the mother who uses food stamps, and about her children who shoot heroin and die of AIDS. Is he talking about physical privations? Well, no, not really; it's worse. He's talking about spiritual character. And there's a link, isn't there, between our proud wealth and the species of arrogant self-deception we fall prey

to; between their pulverizing poverty and their perception and welcome of God's Rule among them; between "have nots" and trusting the "Fear Not."

But let's be honest here: Neither you nor I want any part of that poverty, be it spiritual or physical. Sorry to rain on your parade, Mr. Prince, but your party sucks. Your whole Kingdom sucks. Take your glass slipper and do you-know-what with it.

Furious with the Prince, plotting to kill his One True Love, Cinderella, we find her in the pantry. We abuse and torture and choke her with clutching fingers. We are ugly and evil beyond restoration and we don't even care. There is no Prince who could ever forgive us. For us, there will be no torture too terrible.

PROGNOSIS: Souled

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) : *The Glass Slipper*
But Cinderella, when we have reviled and cast her out, tortured her and left her for dead, is made acceptable. She is found by her Prince, loved, and is raised out of the ashes (of the cross, in this version of the story) and into the Palace. Wearing the Beatitudinal slippers (a perfect fit), she is magnificent. She calls for a Feast and we who ought to be arrested and executed are given an invitation to it as well. Word is that we, of all people, are most welcome this day at the Palace. Word is, she's planning to live happily ever after, and wants us there with her.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) : *One Size Fits All*

And what a Feast it is. Cinderella moves from table to table, through the gardens, greeting the guests, wiping away their tears, reassuring the ones responsible for her suffering (Gen. 50:19-21), washing the feet of fellow Cinderpeople. Watching, we can hardly believe this serving-welcome is authentic. But

Cinderella's welcome of her step-family to their new home can only be called a converting experience. Finally poor in our self-serving ego-spirit, and now filled with the Cinderella Spirit, we get it: Because of who Cinderella is, my future is safe with her. She actually has, really and truly, forgiven me. Me, and the rest of the conspirators. Trusting her, awe and gratitude flood our hearts.

With the Cinderpeople, we nod and smile and cheer and sing, "Yes, Blessed is the Meek One. Blessed is the One who Comes in The Name of the Lord! Blessed is the Pure in Heart! Blessed is the One Who Comforts! Happy are all who follow after Cinderella, and Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness!" And in the last chorus: "Happy are we, finally, to see the Light, to finally know our welcome at this Feast."

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) : *"If the Shoe Fits, You Know What to Do with It."*

As the Feast continues, we find ourselves anxious to step out for a minute and head back to the people we know. We look for the ones who are meek, who mourn, who are pure of heart, any who sit in cinders and watch their lives pass them by. Our own place at the Feast assured, we continue to speak and enact the invitation, the welcome, despite persecution from ugly versions of our former selves. "There are no qualifications, only come, taste and see, trust she is good and be transformed!" Bizarrely, the glass slipper we once upon a time rejected and could not imagine would fit our feet, more and more it seems a perfect match. I am no longer smashing my toes together and trying to jam them into this shoe, rather, as I cross thresholds and move through bus stations, pass through the dull hallways of the world, my feet seem to fit more than they used to. We are mere shadows of our former flouncy selves, more and more we look like just another one of Cinderella's Cinderpeople. Mercy is what we work toward. And peace. But we are not "being merciful" just so

that we have a better chance at being shown mercy. And we do not “seek peace” as a cool way to get called children of God. We’re not like that anymore, not you and me. And life is so much better for it!

“Cinderella, bring your Feast, even to this place!”