



1

What does it mean to be blessed? When have you felt blessed?
 We often talk about being blessed, don't we?
 We think of ourselves as being blessed by a loving partner,
 wonderful children, good health, sufficient food, safe and
 comfortable housing, good schools, maybe even a good church!
 That list could go on and on.

And it reveals what the word blessing often means to us.
 It refers to a good life, and the gratitude we have for the chance
 to live well.

It recalls lovely experiences, good fortune, and a appreciation
 for the gifts we have received.

To have a sense of being blessed is a grateful way to live
 And that life attitude often has a very positive impact on the
 people who surround us.

It is a gift — a blessing! — to live among grateful people.



2

In the opening words to his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus
 explores what it means to be blessed by God.

But his is a surprising list.

He first lists aspects of life we might not consider blessings.
 Those who are poor in spirit, or mourning, or hungering and
 thirsting, or persecuted;

Not exactly what we'd include in a list of blessings...

But then he also refers to those who are meek, or merciful, or
 pure in heart, or peacemakers;

Mostly positive attitudes towards life, at least from the
 perspective of Christian faith.

In his list Jesus covers the good and the bad; the desirable and
 the undesirable.

He declares that God's blessing is real, and significant, no
 matter how life is playing out for us.



We focused on this during Adult Forum today. This was the last meeting in a seven-week overview of Martin Luther's Small Catechism.

Luther encourages us to begin every day with worship:
 Remembering our baptism with the sign of the cross,
 Reciting the Ten Commandments and the Apostle's Creed
 Praying the Lord's Prayer, even singing a hymn!

He encourages us to do the same at the end of the day,
 Bookending every day with God's word and presence,
 He encourages us to pray before and after every meal,
 And to remember that the work we do every day — at home, in the office, at school, in the family — is sacred work.

He is fond of insisting that the work of a homemaker or a trash collector can be every bit as sacred as the work of a Pastor. It is a way of reminding ourselves that God is with us throughout all of life — as a blessing and a strength.



We talked a bit about our personal lives at the opening of this sermon.

How has God blessed us these days at Saint Peter?
 God has blessed us through a terrific group of new members.
 God has blessed us through a Stewardship Team that has inspired us to think of ourselves as Grounded, Gracious and Growing.

God has blessed us through a MOPs group, providing friendships and encouragement to mothers with young children.
 God has blessed us through a Boy Scout Troop that welcomes scouts with all different sorts of abilities.
 God has blessed us through the freedoms of this country which allow us to share our faith publicly without fear.
 God has blessed us in each of these ways.
 We find ourselves grateful and blessed.



God has also blessed us in the midst of difficult circumstances. As Jenn and Jody and their families gathered to give thanks for their dad's life yesterday, Saint Peter members joined with them, as a sign of God's blessing.

When the people of Tanzania suffer with diseases and injuries and struggles, Dr. Jacobson and his colleagues are there as God's blessing.

When someone is in a time of difficulty or transition, a Stephen Minister walks alongside them as God's blessing.

In other times of need Saint Peter Stitchers bring love and comfort, Share our Suppers brings a warm, healthy meal, all of this as a sign of God's blessing.

We find ourselves comforted and strengthened by God in difficult circumstances — another way in which we're blessed.



This is, in part, what the saints teach us.

Today is All Saints Sunday, and we are remembering Saints of old who experienced God's blessing even in the midst of challenging circumstances.

We also remember the Saints among us today — those who have inspired us, and comforted us, and supported us along the way.

The witness of these Saints is as varied as the individuals themselves are.

Yet each of them helps us to remember that no matter what life throws at us, the blessing of God is always with us.

Allowing us to meet our challenges with faith and hope and strength.



One of my favorite stories about Saint Benedict has to do with a conversation he had with some of his brothers about joy. He asked them to describe true joy, and they came up with the kinds of answers you might expect.

Each time he said, “No. That’s not it.”

Then he said to them, if he returned home late on a cold winter evening, after a long trip, and knocked on the door at his monastery, was not recognized, and was not allowed in...

In fact, if he tried three times to secure lodging elsewhere in town, without success, and returned to the monastery each time, only to be left out in the cold...

If, in that moment, he was content — that would be true Christian joy.

Benedict knew something about being blessed by God. In good times and in bad.



The world in which we live may only see blessing in those times when living is easy.

But we know that whether we are filled with joy and delight, or walking in the valley of the shadow of death, God is there. Blessing us. Encouraging us. Strengthening us. Empowering us to be a witness to the difference our faith makes in our lives.

So how is life treating you these days?

Whether you are experiencing good times or bad; a life that is happy or sad,

Remember this: God is with you, and for you. And that makes all the difference in the world.

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Take It Home!


Let's keep the conversation going. Our hosts will have a 7-day devotional guide for you as you leave today. Question for this evening's conversation: "When have I been aware of God's blessing in my own life?"

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As we are quickly making our ways towards Thanksgiving Day, I hope you'll be thinking about the ways in which God has blessed your life.

Take time to give thanks to God for these blessings. As you leave today, our hosts have a 7-day devotional for you. The Bible passages here, and the questions related to them, might give you a chance to reflect on your blessings, and thank God for them.

10



The Last Word



I had many friends to help me to fall; but as to rising again, I was so much left to myself, that I wonder how I was not always on the ground. I praise God for His mercy; for it was He only Who stretched out His hand to me. May He be blessed for ever! Amen.
[Saint Teresa of Avila]

Saint Teresa of Avila 1515-1582


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Saint Teresa of Avila was a Carmelite Nun — a Spanish Mystic. She was a reformer within the Catholic Church who lived through the middle years of the 16th Century.

She once wrote:

“I had many friends to help me to fall; but as to rising again, I was so much left to myself, that I wonder how I was not always on the ground. I praise God for His mercy; for it was He only Who stretched out His hand to me. May He be blessed for ever! Amen.”

Saint Peter
LUTHERAN LITURGY



Hymn of the Day

Please stand as we sing today's
Hymn of the Day.

1st Service: For All the Saints
(page #24)

2nd Service: Children of God
(page #28)

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Please stand with us as we sing today's Hymn of the Day.

**1st Service: For All the Saints
(page #24)**

**2nd Service: Children of God
(page #28)**

Saint Peter
LUTHERAN LITURGY



St. Matthew 5:1-12

5:1 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.

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Saint Peter
LITURGICAL LECTURE

St. Matthew 5:1-12



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.

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