

Sermon – Luke 6:20-31; Ephesians 1:11-23

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Grace Lutheran Church

All Saints Sunday – Year C

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“A Glorious Inheritance”

Sisters and brothers in Christ, grace be unto you and peace in the name God the Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

1. Have you seen them? The saints have been out in full force across Chicagoland these days. Two Tuesdays ago, I was out visiting one of our members at her retirement community. Following the visit, I hopped on the elevator, where I was greeted by a resident clad in Cubs gear. It was the first day of the World Series, so I asked her, “Are the Cubbies going to get it done tonight?” She replied, “Of course!” A younger gentleman cautioned, “Don’t get ahead of yourselves.” She turned and looked at me: “Don’t listen to him. You know, my father was a batboy for the Cubs.” Then, looking at nothing in particular, with a wistful look in her eyes, she said, simply, “He would’ve enjoyed this.” And there, just for an instant, it was as if her long-suffering, long-departed dad was in the elevator with us. It’s a story with a million variations. This Cubs team, this World Series title, wasn’t just about this team or its current fans. The saints, those who had passed down the hopeless hope and love for longtime lovable losers, these saints were here, too. Somehow, this one was for them. Somehow, in cherished memories, they were present when Bryant’s throw his Rizzo’s mitt and the unthinkable was finally made real, apologies to any Cleveland fans present today, or diehard White Sox fans, or those who just don’t like baseball, but we only get to say this every 108 years. I have to tell you, I honestly didn’t think I’d have to actually preach a sermon today. Surely, a Cubs’ World Series title meant that the endtimes were upon us!

2. And yet here we are, gathered not around baseball but around Word and Sacrament, on this All Saints Sunday when we remember and celebrate the lives of the faithful who have gone before us. Our readings today point us toward twin truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ – that a life of faithful discipleship is not a life of ease, and that faith in the grace of God bestows upon us a glorious inheritance, gifts of life abundant and eternal for those who have been marked with the cross of Christ and sealed by the promised Holy Spirit. Today, Henry Lester Maggio receives these promises through the water and Word of baptism. Today, those who have died in the faith during this past year are particularly remembered. So what is this life of faith that is gifted unto the people of God?
3. In his Sermon on the Plain, Jesus shows forth what this life is like. Unlike the Sermon on the Mount, here Jesus teaches on a level plain, declaring that the Kingdom into which we are welcomed is one in which the ways of this world are inverted. The poor, the hungry, the weeping, and the hated of this world – these people who have been pushed to the margins and left out of the good things of this world, these people will find the full laughter and joy of God’s Kingdom. But the rich, the full, the well-thought-of, the respected – woe to these, for they have already received their fill. There is good news here for many, but for all? Is this inverting revolution Jesus brings designed to bring doom upon those who have had it good in this life? Perhaps, and only God knows, but I think this is more invitation than warning. Jesus speaks clearly as to how the “haves” of this world are to live in relation to the “have-nots.” They, *we*, are to live with love, compassion, and generosity as we, by Christ’s power, anticipate the coming Kingdom in today’s world through our own faithful living. If you have, give. A careful reading of Luke’s texts today reminds us that giving is not a one-way street; neither is it an invitation to condescending generosity. After all, the rich, the full, the laughing, the respected stand in even greater need of the Kingdom and its fullness. The

- poor already have the Kingdom! If you want to see and participate in the Kingdom, go to where Jesus says it is! Go – to Kidz Express, to Harmony Community Church, to Martin, Slovakia, to the poor and the hurting and heartbroken in our midst at Grace, to sisters and brothers in any need, in any place – go, with your bodies, your talents, your money, your time, your prayers – go to where Jesus says God is present and active. Go, not just to give out of your worldly abundance, but also to receive the gifts and the presence of God as we discover the gifts and presence of one another.
4. As we go and join together with all of God's people on the level plain that Christ creates at the foot of his cross, we do not go alone. We are met by, surrounded by, those who have in death discovered the resurrection life of Jesus that fill things all in all. Have you seen them? Do you see them today? Look up. See the empty pedestals around the nave. There have been conversations from time to time about placing statues of saints or angels upon the pedestals, and maybe someday that will happen. But this past Wednesday, in our Cornerstones Bible study, it was pointed out how nice it is to have them stand vacant, for then we can see the presence of those dearest to us, those who have lived the challenging call of discipleship and have received the full gift of God's inheritance. So today we look up and we see Margo, Audrey, Bob, Jeremy, Edith, Marcia, Martha, Melvin, Shirley, Harold, Harriette, Joanne, Dorothy, Rosemary, Estella, Noel, Greg, Michael, Ken, and Harriet. We see our grandparents and our parents, all the saints in light, who brought us to the waters of grace and the promises of Jesus Christ. We gather around font and pulpit and find ourselves connected by God's grace across time and space. Have you seen them? Their witness lives on in us as their lives go on in Christ.
 5. Looking to these saints, we discover the promises of our God, this One who calls us, challenges us, and comforts us along the way. Live now as saints of God, for Christ lives in you, seeking to claim common and level ground. You,

like little Henry, have been washed in the death and resurrection of Jesus. You, like all the saints in light, have a glorious inheritance in the Kingdom of God that cannot be shaken or taken from you. You are the streaming, countless host singing, "Alleluia!" Amen.

And now may that peace that passes all understanding keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus, this day and forever. Amen.