

The Living Saints of Holy Trinity
The fourth in a four part Stewardship Series on *Money Matter*\$

November 4, 2007

Rev. Susan Morrison

A Paraphrase of The Beatitudes from Luke 6: 20 – 31
using verses from Eugene Peterson's *The Message*

- Leader: Then Jesus spoke these words.
- Left side: You're blessed when you've lost it all.
God's kingdom is there for the finding.
- Right side: You're blessed when you're ravenously hungry.
Then you're ready for the holy meal.
- Left side: You're blessed when the tears flow freely.
Joy comes with the morning.
- Right side: Count yourself blessed every time someone cuts you down or throws you out, every time someone smears your name to discredit me.
- All: What it means is that the truth is too close for comfort and that that person is uncomfortable. You can be glad when that happens for even though they don't like it, I do....and all heaven applauds.
- Left side: But, oh, what sorrows await the rich and you who think you have it made.
What you have is all you'll ever get.
- Right side: And it's trouble ahead if you're satisfied with yourself.
Your *self* will not satisfy you for long.
- Left side: And it's trouble ahead if you think life's all fun and games.
There's sacrifice expected, and you're going to do it.
- Right side: There's trouble ahead when you live only for the approval of others.
Popularity contests are not truth contests.
- Leader: To you who are ready for the truth, I say this:
- Left side: Love your enemies. Let them bring out the best in you, not the worst.
When someone gives you a hard time, respond with the energies of prayer for that person.

- Right side: If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn the other cheek as well.
- Left side: If someone grabs your shirt, giftwrap your best coat and make a present of it.
- Right side: If someone takes unfair advantage of you, use the occasion to practice the servant life.
- All: No more tit-for-tat stuff. Live generously. Do unto others as you would want them to do unto you.

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On the Church Calendar, today is All Saints Sunday. Traditionally, Protestants don't know a lot about saints. I think that we're doing better at it since our good Catholic friends have taught us much about honoring those people who reflect the life and works of Jesus in all that they do.

But today I want to look at the biblical understanding of saints. It is St. Paul who calls the early Christians "saints" of the church. By doing so, he implies that the very ordinary disciple, the very ordinary person who follows Jesus Christ, can be called a saint. And I like that! Our opening hymn identified lots of ordinary people as living saints. "The world is bright with the joyous saints who love to do Jesus will" the hymn said. "You can meet them in school, on the street, in the store, in church, by the sea, in the house next door; they are saints of God, whether rich or poor, and I mean to be one too." Yes, we who are followers of Jesus Christ ARE the living saints of Holy Trinity.

We've just read Jesus' beatitudes as recorded by Luke. Jesus implies that people who have certain qualities about their life and set certain priorities ARE God's saints. Let's look at Jesus' words for a moment and see if we can get a clearer picture of who might be a saint.

"You're blessed when you've lost it all." What does this mean?

And what about "You're blessed when you're ravenously hungry?"

We all understand Jesus' compassion for those who mourn, for those who grieve the loss of a loved one. When "tears flow freely" Jesus' is there to wipe them and promises that with him, joy will come back into your life.

It seems that a saint is someone who is willing to live a counter cultural life. Following Jesus means stepping out to the beat of a very different drummer than the "me-first, I want it all and I want it now" attitude of our society.

A saint is someone who can love their enemy. A saint is someone who is generous. Don't you love Eugene Peterson's translation?... "If someone grabs your shirt, giftwrap your best coat and make a present of it!"

Simply stated, a saint is someone in whom we see the face of God.

I want to ask you to turn to someone who is seated near you or if you're sitting together as a family, share this conversation together. And I want you to name someone in your life who has been a saint to you. This can be someone who is living or someone who has gone on to Eternal Life. Think about the qualities that we've just talked about and give thanks for that saint in your life who shares those selfless, generous, and accepting gifts.

(People share.) Let's offer a prayer of thanks for these saints in your lives.

Gracious God, we thank you that there are saints in our lives. We thank you that they influence us and that they challenge us to live more like Jesus. Bless them and bless us as we try to live a life that you would applaud. Amen.

This past week, I used my Holy Trinity prayer beads. And I sat each morning and held them in my hand and as I touched each bead, I let one of you come to mind. And I prayed for you and gave thanks for you, for YOU are the living saints of Holy Trinity.

I gave thanks for those who serve in quiet ways – sending notes and cards to those for whom we pray, those who visit and bring news of the church to those who cannot be here, those who offer rides to church and to the UMW circles.

I gave thanks for our spiritual leaders, those whom you have elected to be responsible for committee and task force work. And I gave thanks for each of you who serves on a committee, accomplishing the far reaching work of this church.

I gave thanks for those who provide hospitality every Sunday – the greeters, the ushers, the communion servers, those who prepare the coffee and tea for our Fellowship Time.

I gave thanks for all of you who are teachers and youth leaders and I gave thanks for each child, each youth who comes to church and Sunday School to learn what it means to be Jesus' disciple.

I gave thanks for each member of our staff – truly they give so generously of themselves, often sacrificing their own needs for the good of Holy Trinity.

I gave thanks for each of you who comes to worship, those who sing in the choir, as well as those who ring for the Bell Choirs, and all who help to lead worship. For you and you and you and you – I am thankful. Living saints each of you!

As ordinary saints who desire to do Jesus' will and work here on earth, we also have both the privilege and opportunity of supporting this church. As we've learned these past few weeks, our nature is to be generous. Made in the image of a generous God, we too want

to be generous. We've also been honest about the discipline that it takes to be a generous giver. In order to have financial freedom, we must get out of debt for good! and we give back to God first before we pay our own bills. 10 – 10 – 80 is the budget formula that we've considered as a goal. First 10% to God. Second 10% to yourself to save for emergencies and other needs. And then live off of the remaining 80%. Living below our means rather than above our means takes sacrifice and discipline.

Everyone received a pledge card this morning when you came into church. Those of you who are worshipping together as a family will have a chance to help the children fill in their card. I'd like to ask us to take time now to complete our pledge cards. Let me offer a prayer before we do so and then I'll ask Nancy to play quietly while we make our commitments to Holy Trinity.

Generous God, as your living saints, help us to put you first in our lives. May we be both joyful and generous in our giving. In the name of Jesus Christ, the greatest treasure in our lives, we pray. Amen.