Grace and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

As we celebrate All Saints Day, we thank God for all the baptized, both the famous and the forgotten, both those who lived in the past and those around us today. n our baptism into the death and resurrection of Christ, we are made saints while we are still sinners. As sinners we deal with sin, evil, pain, addiction, abuse, disease and war. Yet, we keep our focus on Christ who has been with the faithful to every generation as we are nurtured by God’s very Spirit. We gather to receive Jesus words of blessing at a time when the landscape is dying and we remember those who have died in Christ this past year and their baptism is now complete. Specifically, today give thanks for the consolation of God and others as we deal with the loss the saints who have gone before us this year as we remember Bev Dirkin, Tim Trim and Brent Ballard, trusting that the promises of God will be fulfilled. We also give thanks for the saints among us who we console and they console and for the sake of saints to come. We certainly give thanks, too, for the fullness of eternal life in which the saints of God who have gone before us now have what we will come to fully enjoy.

Today, we hear how Jesus is in the mountain and gives the first part of the Sermon on the Mount, the beatitudes. This sermon would make much more sense to the Galilean audience than to us who are financially stable today. Jesus addresses the 4 disciples he has at that time but also is speaking to those who come after and to us. The mountain recalls Mt. Sinai. In fact, this story about Jesus mirrors Moses in many important ways. Like during the time of Moses, Israel suffers under an oppressive ruler. Like Moses, Jesus’ life is threatened when he is young. Like Moses, Jesus (and his family) has to flee because of the threat of death. Like Moses, Jesus too emerges out of Egypt to follow God’s call to liberate the people. Like Moses, Jesus wanders in the wilderness and relies on God for sustenance.

Jesus, like Moses interprets and spreads God’s vision of a world aligned with God’s concerns. This sharing and interpreting of these commandments is less an imposition of strictures for an obedient life than a guide to a life of wholeness aligned with God’s creation and grace. Consider the Sermon on the Mount and the Ten Commandments not strictly as rules but as visions for communal wholeness rooted in God’s liberation of the oppressed. Also, like the Ten Commandments, the Sermon on the Mount is narrated and imbedded within a larger story about the character of a faithful God.

The Ten Commandments in Exodus 20 start, not with the call to worship God alone, but a recalling of God’s deliverance of Israel from slavery: “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery” (Exodus 20:2) Similarly, the Sermon on the Mount is not detached from God’s faithfulness as mirrored in the exorcising of demons, the healing of the sick nor the resurrection of the dead. The Sermon on the Mount is not just a list of wise insights but is a reflection of God’s own goodness as reflected in Jesus’ ministry. From Moses to Jesus, the call to live a life of holiness and righteousness is not so much about morals as much as it is a response of gratitude for God’s graceful deeds and a call to recognize God’s holiness.

Therefore, we learn that Jesus’ teaching are not so much of an innovation but a vibrant recalling of tradition. Jesus’ words are not new so much as they are deeply rooted in God’s ancient promises and the ancient vision Moses shares on Mount Sinai. These are not new commandments so much as echoes of the ancient visions of God’s hopes. Jesus was looking for in his followers to live out these traits. This is made difficult because they contradict societal values. Who wants to be persecuted but if we follow Jesus it could happen. They and we are called blessed because God has something special planned for us. Consider these were the traits of Jesus.

For All Saints Sunday I wanted to focus on Matthew 5:4 which says **4**“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Let’s consider how we will be blessed. Our society does not like to suffer. We spend a lot of time and money pursuing happiness. Death does not bring happiness but it is something that is inevitable in our lives. I talked to my son this week and he is still mourning the loss of his brother and he stated there has not really been a death since Grandma dies 17 years ago. That’s true. So we turn to 2 Corinthians 1:4 that says:

**3**Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation, **4**who consoles us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to console those who are in any affliction with the consolation with which we ourselves are consoled by God.

The Sermon of the Mount makes far more sense to the Galilean peasants in the first century living on the margins, or people that go to bed hungry. What we need to decide is if we will echo those promises not just with the words but the way we lead our lives. Amen.