

**All Saints Sunday**  
**Matthew 5:1-12**  
**Preacher: Vicar, Jim Goodyear**

**St. Peter's Lafayette Hill, PA**  
**November 2, 2008**

### **Blessed Children**

The long wait is over. The drought has ended. The nearly 48 hour wait for the finish of a baseball game is now history. The Phillies are World Champions of baseball. Some might call this accomplishment a blessing. It has been twenty-five years since a sports franchise in the city of Philadelphia came home with a championship. For the Phillies it is only the second time in its 125 year history they won the World Series. They appeared in five previous World Series, to come home four times in second place. The trophy of accomplishment resides in Philadelphia once again. The city of Brotherly Love has something to cheer about. We might consider this a blessing to disguise the problems the city is facing.

I am not much of a sports fan. I do try to at least know a little about what is going on in the sports world to have a conversation. I don't profess to know batting averages, players' numbers or even who is on the team. For me I like to at least know the standings of the Phillies and Penn State football. Growing up in York, we followed the Baltimore Orioles. Remember when the Orioles and the Phillies played in the World Series? Yes it was the Orioles who won that Series! There was always one person in our family though who followed the Phillies; my grandfather. I was seven when he died, but I heard many stories of him listening to and later watching the Phillies games on television. Today, my youngest brother and his family are die-hard Phillies fans. Like many of you, true fans follow the home-town favorite through the thick and thin of history. From 1938 to 1942 the Phillies recorded 100 losses or more in each season. In 1945 the Phillies had their 16<sup>th</sup> consecutive losing season, their 39<sup>th</sup> in 40 years. Even their new state-of-the-art stadium, Veterans Stadium, in 1971 couldn't lift them out of the basement. True Phillies fans never give up on their beloved team. Wasn't it this past summer the Phillies passed the monumental mark of their 10 thousandth loss. Through the ups and downs of losing seasons, player trades and injuries, and near winning seasons, fans keep the faith by supporting their team. It felt like the Phillies needed to go through the rough times to get to the prize, a World Series Championship.

Throughout Matthews text, he emphasizes that the kingdom of God is in the here and now. Jesus fulfills the prophets teachings of the Old Testament. Today's text is the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount. It begins with the teachings of blessedness then follows with ethical and moral teachings. Jesus is in Galilee preaching and teaching. He retreats to a mountaintop, the disciples follow him and Jesus begins to teach. Jesus turns their world upside down. No longer are the rich and powerful recipients of God's blessings. Rather the poor, those who mourn, the meek, the hungry and thirsty, the merciful, the peacemakers, the persecuted are the ones who will inherit the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is not just for World Champions. Blessed are the ones who struggle with the hardships of life. We must be careful, however, not to glorify suffering

or treat it as a calling. Suffering is not something to be aspired to, but rather it is the likely result of a life lived faithfully as God has created and called us to be.

God knows we encounter situations that test us. There are times when life seems to challenge our basic needs or make us feel like the world is caving in around us. Jesus tells his disciples that living in faith, will include times when life seems difficult. It is not that God desires we live in despair. God wants us to live in loving relationship with Him and others. Gods favor precedes all our endeavors. Our living in the kingdom here on earth is in response to divine grace, motivated by “because of” not “in order to”. Because of Gods grace we live freely in Him. Each beatitude ends with the reminder that the kingdom of heaven belongs to all people, you will be comforted in grief, you will inherit the earth, you will be filled with bodily nourishment, you will see God, you are a child of God. God will not leave you comfortless. God has promised to be with you.

Because of Gods grace, because of God’s presence among us, we live in the moment to enjoy the immediate moment for what is at hand, regardless of the circumstance. To live in trust of what God has promised is to find a surpassing joy now and here. Yes, it is difficult at times. When a personal relationship seems to go in a different direction, or when you lose financial resources due to poor economic conditions, when a loved one dies it is difficult to know Gods presence with us. But it is Gods grace that comforts and gives us life in the days and weeks ahead. It is like when our favorite baseball team is consistently at the bottom of the standings and we still support them.

The mother of a ten-year-old boy who was taken from her by a malignant disease knew something her neighbors and even her pastor did not yet appreciate. As they all stood by the grave amid the crying of relatives and the solemn faces of stunned friends, she asked for the opportunity to say a prayer. The momentary quiet was made holy by her prayer. “Dear God, thank you for the joy which Jimmy brought into my life; help me to keep the memory of his love, and to be worthy of it as long as there is life in me!” This young mother, who mourns, discovered something of God’s comfort.

This gift of grace through faith is from God’s embracing love of the whole world. This gift in us is intended for God’s mission in the world. We have been blessed by the saints in heaven whom we remember this day. In the prayer before Communion, we hear, “By the witness of the saints you show us the hope of our calling and strengthen us to run the road set before us...So with all the saints, and hosts of heaven we praise your name and join their unending hymn.” Before we are called to join the heavenly saints we are freed to go into the world God loves, as saints who love the world as Jesus has loved us. To be a part of the world to bring Jesus’ love to those struggling in difficult times; to those who are without work or food or warm clothing; to those oppressed by society; to those who mourn a loss; Be near to them providing respite from their despair.

Maybe you think you are not saintly enough for God’s work. Let me remind you of two Jesus sent out on God’s mission. There was the saint who denied Jesus three times...St. Peter. What about the man who was despised because he was a first century IRS agent who was ‘on the take’...St. Matthew.

It is good to remember that God entrusts God's mission in the world to people like this. Somehow the light of the world in Jesus shines through them and us. Because of the gift of Jesus for the salvation of all sinners which justifies our calling as saints, "in the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven". The world needs that light. The world needs saints who by grace are freed to love God with everything they are and have, plus loving their neighbors as themselves. The world needs to know there are sinner saints who live by the gift of grace they have received and offer that gift to others in word and deed. Blessed Child of God, go out into the world, share the love of Jesus with others.

From John's first letter, "See what love the Father has gives us that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this; when he is revealed, we will belike him, for we will see him as he is. And all who have this hope in him purify themselves just as he is pure." Amen.