

Jesus gathers this motley crew around him: the fishers, the tax collectors, the hardworking and the lazy, the pious and the cheats. He gathers the disciples around himself and describes to them just what this new community he is creating will look like. He describes a new way of **being** in the world, a way aligned with the Creator's intentions for all life from the beginning of time; a way that would anger the authorities; frustrate the order keepers: enrage the polite and provoke those who benefit from maintaining the status quo.

He gathers folks around and begins to paint a picture of what life looks like when God gets God's way: the oddity of it all, the whimsy, the topsy turvy-ness of the kingdom of God. And so, he describes those who are blessed and those who are in danger.

But, "Blessed" is too churchy a word and "happy" is too small to encompass what Jesus is getting at in this description of a world aligned with God's intentions. Better, maybe is "unburdened" or "satisfied". And "Woe" is not "cursed" or "unhappy" or "damned". Woe is more like: "Look out!" "Beware! You're headed for trouble."¹

Jesus gathers us in and offers us his vision of reality: God's kingdom and the alternative. God's kingdom is where things **seem** topsy turvy. The alternative is the way of danger. God's kingdom here and now is where the poor, the hungry and those who weep receive the place of honor; where the hated, rejected, insulted, and condemned are honored. Jesus invites us into this reality here and now, living a topsy turvy life now.... that **becomes** our eternity.

But, **beware** if we choose to reject that topsy-turvy world of God's intentions for creation. Look out if we try to maintain the advantage; beware if we try to lord it over the weak and the marginalized; hoard our wealth. Beware: the life we'll be creating for ourselves. We will have **only** our wealth, what seems like security, and **memories** of distractions and past honors to console us. But, that is **all** we will have, things, stuff.

In this upside-down world that Jesus is creating, enemies become friends; An eye for an eye becomes compassion for those who hate us and blessing those who curse us; praying for those who want to harm us.

In this topsy turvy world, where God gets God's way there is no more death; there is no more mourning or crying. And God **does** get God's way. That's what raising Jesus from death to new life was all about. The power of death was ended. Our loved ones still die. But that's not the last word.

God gets God's way and so nothing can separate us from God's love in Christ Jesus: not death or life, not angels or rulers, not present things or future things, not powers or height or depth, or any other thing that is created will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

(Romans 8)

When God gets God's way and God **always** gets God's way, then **this** motley crew becomes the community of saints throughout all time and space, not because of anything we have done, but because of WHO God is. In this reality our efforts at holiness are gathered by God's Spirit and transformed into abundant life: fabric sewn and quilted becomes comfort for the refugee; papers

graded at a cold weather shelter become warmth and safety for the unhoused; a church building: bricks and mortar become sanctuary and a new chance at a good life for families.

When God gets God's way and God always does in the end, no one chooses the alternative way going it alone, believing the lies that pit us against each other; falling prey to the fear mongers who want us to hate and mistrust those who look or act or worship differently.

This is the reality that God desires here and now and for eternity and it wouldn't be the same with you and you and you and me.

There is room for us all just as we are where we come with our strength and our weakness and it's all transformed by God's love into the beautiful party of eternity where everyone is welcome.

In a few minutes we're going to name those who have died in the past year and those who are always on our hearts no matter how long ago they died. We do this to remember and to remember the body of Christ, past, present and future everywhere; to be reminded that we are all **one**; to give God thanks for the lives of the saints who have gone before us. We call **all** Christians who have come before us "saints." And since we too are a part of the communion of Saints we too are saints – not saintly in behavior perhaps, certainly not if that means perfect. But, because we do our best to trust Jesus, we are saints. We are Saints because God **says** we're part of the family and in God's family **God's love** is what matters. Because God is love we all get included. Not because we're perfect but because we are loved by God, and so we are all promised a place in God's eternal story.

Unburdened, satisfied, BLESSED are we who trust in Jesus, saints everyone. Amen.

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¹ Matt Skinner on Working Preacher