

# Sermons at Oak Grove

November 2, 2008

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*Matthew 5:1-12*

*"Being Cared For"*  
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## **Scripture Readings: Matthew 5:1-12**

<sup>1</sup>When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. <sup>2</sup>Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

<sup>3</sup>"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>4</sup>"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. <sup>5</sup>"Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. <sup>6</sup>"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. <sup>7</sup>"Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. <sup>8</sup>"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. <sup>9</sup>"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. <sup>10</sup>"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. <sup>11</sup>"Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. <sup>12</sup>Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

## **Sermon: "Being Cared For"**

In all honesty I must confess that this past week it was difficult to find the time to sit down and write a sermon. When I did finally sit down on Friday morning it was challenging for me to put my thoughts on paper as my mind was scattered and I was too restless to stay focused. My guess is that

many of you feel the same way on this last weekend before the elections, after months of negative campaigning and economical turmoil.

Perhaps we feel that we just want to come to worship to feel God's calming presence and reassurance in this ocean of uncertainty and turmoil. But, in some ways today's service is anything but calming as we have the children playing their harmonicas, our 3<sup>rd</sup> graders receiving their Bibles, we have a baptism, we are celebrating communion and we remember the names and lives of departed members, family, and friends, as symbolized by the pictures surrounding us. So here we are, finding ourselves worshipping God the way we have been living our lives these past weeks, busy and scattered, trying to wrest meaning from all the little bits and pieces.

It is in the midst of our frantic lives that Jesus comes to us today reminding us of a different present tense, a different reality where we are less anxious, less frantic, trusting more and more on the grace of God, and where we have more time for one another and the stranger we meet. In our Gospel Reading Jesus is reminding us of a reality "where those who mourn are comforted rather than abandoned, where those who hunger and thirst for righteousness are satisfied, not ignored or shouted down, where the meek inherit the earth rather than being ground into the dust."<sup>1</sup> This is the context of our living, our behavior and our relationships; this is the reality of divine grace, where God's gracious initiative precedes our lives and God's favor accompanies our living.

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<sup>1</sup> Mary Hinkle Shore. "[Pilgrim Preaching](http://maryhinkle.typepad.com/pilgrim_preaching/)" Readings for Preachers  
[http://maryhinkle.typepad.com/pilgrim\\_preaching/](http://maryhinkle.typepad.com/pilgrim_preaching/)

See, the Beatitudes, our reading of today, “appear at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, before a single instruction is given, before there has been time for obedience or disobedience. If the blessings were only for the deserving, very likely they would be stated at the end of the sermon, probably prefaced with the conditional clause, "If you have done all these things." But appearing at the beginning, they say that God’s favor precedes all our endeavors. In fact, all our efforts at kingdom living are in response to divine grace, motivated by "because of," not "in order to<sup>2</sup>”.

Here to remind us today of this kingdom reality are table, font, Bible, and all the saints surrounding us with their ever-loving presence. In the baptism of baby Paige “we are reminded that we originated in the magnificent, inexplicable love of a God who loved the world into generous being ... that each of us has been miraculously loved into existence by God.” And then the service of “bread and wine proclaims that our lives will end in God, and that this well-being cannot be taken from us<sup>3</sup>.”

Walter Brueggemann<sup>4</sup> writes that these sacraments remind us that “we can live according to an ethic whereby we are not driven, controlled, anxious, frantic or greedy, precisely because we are sufficiently at home and at peace to care about others as we have been cared for.... This reality has nothing to do with being Republicans or Democrats, liberals or conservatives, socialists or capitalists. It is much more elemental: the creation is infused with the Creator's generosity”!

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<sup>2</sup> Fred B. Craddock. *Hearing God's Blessing (Matt. 5:1-12in; Christian Century*, January 24, 1990, p. 74,

<sup>3</sup> Brueggemann, Walter. ["The Liturgy of Abundance, the Myth of Scarcity,"](#) *The Christian Century*, 1999

<sup>4</sup> *ibid*

This generosity then is the orientation of our lives, the starting point of our giving, the source of our caring and a reminder of Psalm 46:10...Be still and know that I am God!

Join me now as we will sing Hymn 461, God is Here! May the words be our prayer, the dedication of our lives