

All Saints Day “What Makes Life Beautiful?”

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Let me start off with the question: what do you think defines a beautiful life? What does a beautiful life mean to you? What does it look like? What are your goals? Who are the people in your life? Now, take a second to imagine yourself five years or even ten years from now. Where are you in life? Where do you see yourself? Every one of us hopes that their life will be beautiful ten years from now. How do you measure that? What constitutes a beautiful life?

My friends, to celebrate the feast of All Saints, the Church offers us the Gospel reading from Matthew called the Beatitudes. We find the word beautiful in the word beatitude because the beatitudes are Jesus’ recipe for how to live a beautiful life. I love how the Gospel reading begins with Jesus situating himself on the mount. If you visit the location of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, you will discover that it is actually a good sized hill overlooking the Sea of Galilee. There is a lovely church on top and a nice trail that leads you down a grassy slope to the shore below. Mountains are places where you cannot climb higher. It is that place where the earth touches heaven. It is from that place where Jesus teaches his followers the spirit of the Law of Moses rather than the letter.

On the feast of all saints, Jesus is talking us by the hand up to that mountain top vista to help us see what makes life beautiful. Let’s stop a moment and think about our answers a minute ago of what would make our life beautiful five years from now, or even ten or twenty years from now, and compare them with Jesus’ perspective. From Jesus’ perspective, people who are faithful, endure suffering with faith, who are meek and merciful, clean of heart and peacemakers are people who live beautiful lives. How does Jesus’ perspective measure up with our perspective?

You see, if you look at the lives of the saints, there are some basic traits they have that they all have in common, beginning with...their lives were not about them. Everything about their lives pointed to Jesus. Think of Mother Teresa, Maximillian Kolbe, Kateri Tekakwitha, Oscar Romero, Paul VI, Mother Cabrini and John Paul II. We wouldn’t even know their names if their lives weren’t first and foremost about Jesus. Think about that, we wouldn’t even know their names. Secondly, everything about their lives was about serving others rather than themselves. Their lives were not about them, from their perspective, others were more important than themselves. These are very basic and fundamental insights into the saints. They lived their lives for God and others. And that is what makes their lives beautiful to us. This is what makes their lives shine.

Now think again about what will make your life beautiful five years from now, ten years from now, fifty years from now. Jesus calls us to be saints. One of the titles for the Church is the Communion of Saints. Jesus leads us up a mountain today to give us a view of our horizons. And how often are we sinners tempted by lesser treasure? There are so many things we try to collect

in this life that we think have worth but eventually fail to satisfy. There is a God shaped hole in our hearts that only God can satisfy but we fill it with things that eventually turn to dust. Like I shared with you last weekend, Saint Augustine after years trying to find happiness in the world, and failing spectacularly over and over again, finally came to the conclusion that God made us for himself and so our hearts are restless until they rest in him. Only when he figured that out did his life become beautiful. When our hearts finally rest in God, all the other things we value in our lives find their proper place.

And so, what makes life beautiful? Here is my perspective, and I have shared this with you before, as a priest I am honored to visit a lot of dying people in hospitals, people at the end of their lives reflecting on their lives. I perform a lot of funerals too. And there are two kinds of people out there who intrigue me the most. There are those who lived lives for themselves, accumulated a lot of possessions and things, but not a lot of relationships, and there are those who lived lives for others who accumulated a lot of relationships along the way, but maybe not a lot of things. Let me tell you something, when you are dying in a hospital bed, it doesn't matter how big your house is or how fancy your car is. It also doesn't matter if you got A's on all your tests, it doesn't even really matter where you went to school, where you were employed or the size of your salary. In the end, bank accounts and smart phones will not grieve for you. Mortgages do not hold your hand. In a hospital bed, gold and silver feel cold on the skin. Do you know what feels warm on the skin? What feels warm on your skin are the hands, hugs and kisses of the relationships you have gathered through your life and the people you have touched. How do you gain those relationships? Make others more important than yourself. Do you know what really feels warm in your heart and soul? A relationship with Jesus. How do you get a relationship with Jesus? Make Jesus more important than you. Live your life for him. Why? Because Jesus would give his life for you, and he did on the cross! That is how much Jesus loves you.

My friends, think again what will make your life beautiful five years from now, ten years from now, or a thousand years from now. Jesus has led us up a mountain side to give us a glimpse of what will make our lives beautiful. From Jesus' perspective, people who are faithful, endure suffering with faith, are meek and merciful, clean of heart and peacemakers are people who live beautiful lives. How does Jesus' perspective measure with our perspective?

Let's hear again the promises he makes to people who have lived holy lives.

Jesus says, "Theirs is the kingdom of God."

"They will be comforted"

"They will inherit the land"

"They will be satisfied"

“They will be shown mercy”

“They will see God”

“They will be called children of God”

My friends, today is All Saints Day. Since we are called to be a communion of saints, today is also our day. In the beatitudes, Jesus gives us the recipe for a beautiful life and we take the time today to prayerfully reflect what would make our lives beautiful. What makes your life beautiful today? What would make your life beautiful tomorrow? The Church’s sincerest recommendation this evening: start with Jesus who is the way, the truth and the life.