

November 2, 2025

All Saints' Day

The Rev. Amanda Gerken-Nelson

While this morning's gospel reading is a great and very familiar pericope from Luke's gospel – or at least it feels familiar for the ways it reminds us of its close twin in Matthew's gospel – I feel like it's an incomplete selection from Luke's 6th chapter

In my opinion, this morning's text from the Revised Common Lectionary – the tool that gives us our weekly reading selections – should have included verses 12 through 19 as well.

Hear what they say:

“Now during those days he went out to the mountain to pray, and he spent the night in prayer to God. And when day came, he called his disciples and chose twelve of them, whom he also named apostles: Simon, whom he named Peter, and his brother Andrew, and James, and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James son of Alphaeus, and Simon, who was called the Zealot, and Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

“He came down with them and stood on a level place with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea, Jerusalem, and the coast of Tyre and Sidon. They had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases, and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. And everyone in the crowd was trying to touch him, for power came out from him and healed all of them.

“Then he looked up at his disciples and said...”

Game changer, right?

No, I realize the value of these additional 8 verses is maybe at first obscure, but to me they help to distinguish Luke's telling of this meaningful moment in Jesus' ministry from Matthew's more famous version

Namely, these verses give us a location for Jesus' sermon that's different from Matthew, and a sense of who he was speaking to, the audience – and these two details add great meaning to the story

In Matthew, this text is either called the Beatitudes or the Sermon on the...Mount

Compare that to verse 17 in Luke's text: “[Jesus] came down with them and stood on a level place with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people”

In Matthew's version of this story, Jesus preaches to his disciples up at the top of the mountain

Luke tells a different story, in his gospel, Jesus came down and stood on a level place with a great crowd

Mountaintop experiences have their place in our lives and have their place in scripture: think of Moses meeting God in the burning bush and later receiving the ten commandments atop Mt. Sinai, or think of Jesus' transfiguration which takes place on top of a mountain

Mountaintop moments have their place

But Luke tells a different story, Luke talks about Jesus a little differently – and I like it (if you couldn't tell)

Luke's Jesus is the Jesus who comes down and stands with the crowd on a level plain

Luke's Jesus is the Jesus his mother, Mary, sang about when she was told about the baby she would bear:

“He has brought down the powerful from their thrones  
and lifted up the lowly;  
he has filled the hungry with good things  
and sent the rich away empty.” (Luke 1:52-53)

Luke's Jesus is the Jesus who at the outset of his ministry unrolled a scroll in the Temple and proclaimed:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
to bring good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives  
and recovery of sight to the blind,  
to set free those who are oppressed,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.” (Luke 4:18-19)

Luke's Jesus is the Jesus who comes down and stands with the crowd on a level plain and preaches:

“Blessed are you who are poor,  
for yours is the kingdom of God.  
Blessed are you who are hungry now,  
for you will be filled.  
Blessed are you who weep now,  
for you will laugh.”

and:

“Love your enemies; do good to those who hate you; bless those who curse you; pray for those who mistreat you...Do to others as you would have them do to you.”

Not from a position on high, but in the midst of us, Jesus teaches us, encourages us, and guides us

Not a sermon on the mount but a sermon on the plain – in the midst of us

Jesus meets us where we are and says “come on a journey with me, a journey of liberation!”

Jesus meets us

And the us that Jesus meets is the other detail that including verses 12-19 reveals to us

Debra Mumford of Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary helps us identify three groups that make up the “us” of the audience in Luke’s gospel:

“The first group was the crowd. In verse 17, we read that the crowd was made up of people from Judea, Jerusalem and the coast of Tyre and Sidon. While they wanted to hear what Jesus had to say, the purpose of their presence was very pragmatic; they first and foremost needed Jesus to heal them...

“The second group was the disciples. Disciples were those who followed Jesus and not only wanted to hear what Jesus had to say, they also wanted and needed to learn from him. With their learnings they would be able to shape and change their thinking and living to comport with the will of God that Jesus communicated to them.

“The third group was composed of the newly appointed twelve apostles. While all apostles were also disciples, not all disciples were apostles. These were people hand-selected by Jesus to be his emissaries, to continue to do the work he began during his earthly ministry.”<sup>1</sup>

These are those Jesus came down and stood with, these are those to whom Jesus preached his Sermon on the Plain: those who came to him seeking healing, disciples seeking wisdom, and apostles being commissioned to go forth and do as he proclaimed

Who are the “us” gathered here this morning? Who are we who gather this morning to hear Jesus’ proclamation and what is it we are seeking?

Are you one of the crowd seeking healing? A disciple seeking wisdom? An Apostle coming to be reminded of your calling?

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/all-saints-day-2/commentary-on-luke-620-31-5>

Take heart, dear ones, Jesus comes down to you.

And, more!

Are you one who is new to this whole faith thing and have come still trying to figure out what it all means?

Take heart, dear ones, Jesus comes down to you

Have you come as one who is bearing the weight of grief on this All Saints' Day seeking peace and comfort?

Take heart, dear ones, Jesus comes down to you

Have you come as one worn out, burned out, with worry seeking a source of strength to keep going?

Take heart, dear ones, Jesus comes down to you.

No matter how we come to be here today, Jesus is not just speaking at you and hoping something sticks – Jesus has come down to be on a level plain with you and meets you where you are

And it is this Jesus, Luke's Jesus, who doesn't just tell us about a beautiful heaven that we will all reach some time in the future, but Luke's Jesus paints the picture of God's kingdom and then picks up a paint brush and says "let's paint together"

Jesus comes down and meets us where we are and says "come on a journey with me, a journey of liberation! Come!"

And I say:

*Just as I am, without one plea,  
but that thy blood was shed for me,  
and that thou bidd'st me come to thee,  
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.*

*Just as I am, though tossed about  
with many a conflict, many a doubt,  
fightings and fears within, without,  
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.*

*Just as I am, thou wilt receive,  
wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;  
because thy promise I believe,  
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.*

Amen.