

Pastor writes

Greetings to you! The 1<sup>st</sup> of November is earmarked as All Saints day. Today we celebrate and give thanks to God for his saints who have gone before us. We also celebrate today as Council for World Mission Sunday. Our theme for this morning is, 'God is glorified in his saints, in whom we see the riches of his grace.' But who are the saints? Are saints only those who are beatified and acknowledged by the Church to have done some miracle? or is it somebody with amazing powers? The word saint in the Greek literally means 'holy one' or 'one who is set apart.' Paul regularly calls the believers as saints in the NT. So God is glorified in every believer where his grace is operative. However, the saints are those who recognize the desperate need for God's grace. In the discourse on discipleship popularly known as the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus teaches the essential qualities that are needed in every believer. There are nine different qualities or characteristics which can be clubbed into three groups of three under the headings: repentance, righteousness and reconciliation. The word 'blessed' refers to the deep inner joy of those who have long awaited the salvation promised by God and who now begin to experience its fulfillment.

In the first section of repentance Jesus says, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' This refers to those who are materially poor. The needy had no refuge but God. The poor in spirit are those who acknowledge their spiritual bankruptcy before God. Saints are those who depend completely on the grace of God. Jesus then says, 'Blessed are those who mourn for they will be comforted.' It is not the sorrow of bereavement that Jesus is talking about but the sorrow of repentance - the state of contrition. Mourners who bewail their sinfulness will be comforted by God by the forgiveness of sin. Jesus then says, 'Blessed are the meek for they will inherit the earth.' Meekness is essentially a true view of oneself expressing itself in attitude and conduct with respect to others. They will inherit the earth because of their humility. These first three qualities refer to repentance.

The next three qualities are about righteousness. Jesus says that those who hunger and thirst for righteousness will be filled. Spiritual hunger is characteristic of all God's people. We must seek righteousness in all spheres of our life: Legal righteousness – a right relationship with God; Moral righteousness – a righteousness of character and conduct which pleases God; Social righteousness seeking the liberation those who are oppressed. The next two are about being persecuted for righteousness sake. Persecution is a token of Christian genuineness and authenticity. They also will be the ones who will inherit God's kingdom and they will be rewarded.

The third set of qualities can be grouped under the title of 'reconcilers'. Jesus says that the merciful will be shown mercy. We are therefore called to show mercy. Jesus then says, 'Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.' The pure in heart are the ones who are single hearted and have no masks. They are absolutely transparent. "Pure in heart" refers to the condition of the inner core of a person that is, to thoughts and motivation, and hence anticipates the internalizing of the commandments by Jesus in the

material that follows in the sermon. It takes for granted right actions but asks for integrity in the doing of those actions - a consistency between the inner springs of one's conduct and the conduct itself.

The final characteristics are the peace makers who will be called the children of God. Peace making is divine work, for peace means reconciliation and God is the author of it. God made peace with us at immense cost even at the price of his only Son. So we too are to bring in peace and reconciliation.

Even as we celebrate and give thanks to God for his saints who have gone before us, we see the riches of his grace in their lives. We too are called to follow in their footsteps as we follow the path of radical discipleship which Jesus teaches. May God help us to be genuine saints.

Paul Swarup  
3<sup>rd</sup> November, 2013