

## The Quilt

All Saints Sunday A; Matthew 5:1-12

My mother Joanne is a quilter. She quilts at her church with several other dedicated quilters to create these blankets of beauty for people home and abroad who are in need. Every year, they pack up the quilts they have made in boxes and send them to Lutheran World Relief, where they are disbursed throughout the world. And As a child, I can remember squares and squares of colorful, festive, and patterned material everywhere in the sewing room of the house.

My mother collected sheets for the backs of these quilts; she would wait for sales before buying the batting for them, and would spend countless hours cutting up squares to make just the right pattern come alive. Because of Covid 19, my Mother does not right now quilt at the church, but will likely be one of the first ones back when our world passes through this difficult time.

My Mother's quilting is evangelism. Her quilts promote the Good News. She believes in

Christ, who rose from the dead, who appeared to those women that Easter day saying, go and tell my brothers. And, this belief was her purpose in sewing these quilts. She sews the Gospel of Jesus Christ stitch by stitch, and she didn't need to do it with words in a pulpit or by evangelizing to strangers on the street. She does it with quilts...spread God's word like a seed, square by square, blanket by blanket, tie by tie, and stitch by stitch. She sews the Gospel. My mother, like all the saints before her, is a living saint at 92. I lift her up today because she is one of the ones who taught me the faith.

You may know that St. John's also has a dedicated, faithful group of quilters. This quilt here is one that was made by them. I loved this quilt the moment I saw it at a silent auction. I was not about to let this one slip from coming to our house! And, whenever I look at this quilt, I think of the evangelists who sewed it and all those who provide such gifts of God's love to the world.

When hearing Jesus comfort the crowds with his teaching from today's Gospel in

Matthew, these phrases which we call ‘beatitudes’, it brought me back to this image of a quilt, how all the blessed, and all the saints in my life are a patchwork of people and experiences, of grieving and joy, of belief and doubt, of death and resurrection. And, on this day, when we remember those saints who have gone before us and also ponder upon those now living who proclaim faith to and for us, we can sew our own metaphorical quilt of the faithful.

Square by square, what would your quilt look like? If you were to make one comprised of all times of your life where your faith took part, what would it be? What tapestry would be created because of those who have been in your life? Who are the blessed to be added as a square to your quilt in life? What are the major life passages, experiences that get sewn in along the way?

As we hear in the words of Jesus today, it will include times of grief, times of loss, times of division and hardship. The “blessed” ones - When Jesus speaks of them, they are also wholly human. This year has been tough for everyone. And,

especially on a day when we remember all those who have died, it is especially fitting to recognize also those Jesus says we are blessed: when we do mourn, when we are poor in spirit, when we do hunger for righteousness, and when we are meek. Covid 19 and its effects have now been sewn in, so to speak, to all of our experiences, even if we wish that it wouldn’t.

So, on this All Saints day, we do point to our grieving and our struggle, but we also point to the promises of the Resurrection. This quilt that is being sewn is like the tablecloth at the heavenly banquet, spread before us, a table that welcomes and has plenty of space for more. This table has a host, Jesus Christ, who invites all the faithful to it.

As we hear in Revelation chapter 7: “They will hunger no more, and thirst no more; the sun will not strike them, nor any scorching heat; for the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of the water of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.” Amen.

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