

Saints of Old & Saints Today

Thomas Robinson, *Shaped by Jesus for Life 5*, March 17, 2019

Matthew 5:17-24

¹⁷ “Don’t think that I came to **destroy the Law or the Prophets**; I didn’t come to destroy, but but **to fill them up**. ¹⁸ For truly, I’m telling you, until the heaven and the earth pass away, not one iota or one pen-stroke, will pass away from the Law until all things happen.

¹⁹ Therefore, whoever lets go of one of these commandments, even the least, and teaches people in that way, will be called **least in the kingdom of the heavens**. But whoever does and teaches (them), they’ll be called **great in the kingdom of the heavens**.

²⁰ For I’m telling you, unless your **righteousness abounds in greater measure than the teachers of the law and Pharisees**, you will certainly not **enter the kingdom of the heavens**.

²¹ You’ve heard that it was **said to people long ago, ‘You shall not murder’** [Ex 20:13; Dt 5:17], and ‘whoever murders will be **liable to judgment in court**.’ [Num 35:10-30] ²² But I myself am telling you that **all who are angry** with their brother or sister will be **liable to judgment in court**. Whoever says to their brother or sister, ‘**Idiot!**’ will be liable to the **Supreme Court** (Sanhedrin). And whoever says, ‘**Fool!**’ will be liable to the great **Garbage Dump** (Gehenna) that’s on **fire**.

²³ So if you’re **offering your gift at the temple altar**, and there you remember that **your brother or sister has something against you**, ²⁴ leave your gift there in front of the altar and go. **First be reconciled to your brother or sister**, and then come back and offer your gift.

1 Corinthians 1:1-2

¹ Paul, ... ² to God’s assembly that’s in Corinth, people made holy (*hagiazsein*, sanctified) in Messiah Jesus, called to be saints (*hagios*, a holy people) together with everyone who calls on the name of our Lord Jesus Messiah in every place both their Lord and ours.

Ephesians 4:11-13

¹¹ The gifts Jesus gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some shepherds and teachers, ¹² for equipping the saints (*hagios*) for work of service, for building up the body of the Messiah, ¹³ until all of us come to the oneness that belongs to the faith and to the knowledge of the Son of God, to a complete adult, to the measure of maturity of the fullness of the Messiah.

Daniel 7:14, 18

¹⁴ And to him (the Son of Man) was given royal authority and glory and kingship, that all nations should serve him. His rule is an everlasting kingdom that will never pass away.

¹⁸ But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom into the ages, into the ages of ages.

Exodus 20:13; Numbers 35:24, 30

¹³ You shall not murder. ... ^{Num 35:24} The assembly shall judge between the “slayer” and the “redeemer of blood” according to judicial rulings. ... ³⁰ The murderer shall be put to death on the evidence of two or more witnesses, but no one shall be put to death on the testimony of one witness.

Who's really Great in God's Kingdom? – a real Saint!

Jesus: *"Change your way of thinking, for the kingdom of heaven has come near!"* Thinking about Saint Patrick's day. Also about the growth of faith in Jesus in Asia, Africa, etc. The distinctive forms of churches, music, organization, architecture.

Is St. Patrick a saint? In what sense? Someone canonized? Someone great in Christianity? What does that mean? The word "saints" is used in many NT translations. What does it mean? "Holy" (*hagios*)! Is that some special achievement in religion? Martyrdom?

Jesus and the Law and the Prophets

Many in Jesus time wanted to be God's "holy people." Most movements wanted to create a purified people. Especially the Pharisees with Teachers of Law, famous for rigorous obedience to Torah. They condemned Jesus' lack of rigor – "tax collectors & sinners."

Jesus in Mt. 5:17-19 insists on filling/fulfilling, doing and teaching the Law & Prophets. He sounds like a Pharisee or scribe! But then he insists they don't even come close to God's kingdom. Their rigorism can't define the Law or God's kingdom. Then he begins a radical challenge to their entire vision of filling/doing/teaching the Law means! Anger and reconciliation, desire & control, power over others, truthfulness, resisting evil, loving enemies. Many still would rather be scribes than take on Jesus' challenge.

Becoming Saints – How do I apply for the Title?

In the NT "saints" is always plural. Paul, Peter are never called Holy/Saint Paul, et al. Being part of the saints is sharing in the challenge of new life given by Jesus, brought to power by his death and resurrection. It is a gift given by Jesus, but the gift is a life-long process of transformation and growth. The saints may yet need a lot of work. The community, church, is the place of "people made holy" – learning, practicing Jesus' change of thinking. Often a long, arduous process. Jesus' gifts are for equipping saints to embody Jesus' self-giving love in service and grow into maturity defined by Jesus.

Saint Patrick – Was he?

Yes, one of the saints, but not because he was canonized! Not as the Patron Saint of Ireland. Not as a wonderworker. That gets him parades, legends (snakes). But read his "Confession" – no amazing powers except the power of Christ transforming his life. He was born on the edge of the Roman empire, when (c. 400) Theodosius made it all "Christian" But Patrick grew up a Christian un-believer in Britain. At 16, he was captured and enslaved. As a slave in Ireland he found faith / mission. He lived it in his own time in Ireland beyond the empire in a land of warlord violence when the church was accommodating to imperial violence with new scribal rules and power seekers. He knew Jesus had given him life, and it transformed his thinking and action – "saints." It's the same process in NYC or in churches in Indonesia, China, India, Nigeria. Scribal rules always tempt, but Jesus still calls us to be "saints" growing into his own fullness.