May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be acceptable in your sight, oh Lord, our Redeemer. Amen. Well, today is All Saints Day, and we must give thanks for the saints at Peachtree Publishing Services, the very introverted and really quite obsessive saints at Peachtree Publishing Services. Because without these dear ones, we would not be able to trust our Bibles, literally. You see, the 20 full-time workers at Peachtree Publishing Services perform the essential work of proofreading Bibles before they go to print. Uh, they do this for 80% of Protestant Bibles printed in the US. They check 300,000 details on every Bible before publication, and they've recently celebrated their one billionth perfectly proofed Bible. Because proofreading a Bible is really rather serious, isn't it? Um, this is the word of God, so you'd better get it right. No one likes being misquoted, and I suspect that includes God. Imagine the havoc you would cause with a typo in the words of Jesus, like the unfortunate printer of an edition in 1716. In that famous story of the woman caught in adultery in John 6, right at the end, Jesus instructs the woman to "Go and sin no more." But not in the 1716 version, he doesn't. The dozy printer accidentally reversed the two letters of the word no with dramatic consequences. So, "Go and sin no more" became "Go and sin on more." It quickly became known as the Sin On Bible. And, and it's the ultimate free pass, isn't it? I can do whatever I want. Jesus says, "Look, go, go and sin on more." In my mind, I can see Matthew taking his manuscripts to the publisher, and they do the proofreading, and they get to chapter five, and they get anxious. "Blessed are the meek." No, that can't be right. "Blessed are the poor in spirit." No, that's

clearly a typo. "Blessed are the merciful." No, Matthew, mate, you must have misheard. There was a big crowd that day for the Sermon on the Mount. Someone near you must have coughed at just the wrong moment, and you thought Jesus said merciful, but he really said Percival. Blessed is every man named Percival. I just can't print this, Matthew. Come back with a more accurate version of what Jesus said. You know, a bit more of the, "Blessed are the powerful, the wealthy, the assertive," that kind of thing Tough. There's no error here. There's no typo that we can, uh, crawl through. The Archbishop of York says Matthew 5:1-12 is, quote, "The most important subversive and revolutionary text in the Bible." I think he may be right. Here's how the Message version puts it. You are blessed when you are at the end of your rope. With less of you, there is more of God. You're blessed when you feel you've lost what is most dear to you. Only then can you be embraced by the one most dear to you. You're blessed when you're content with just who you are. No more, no less. That's the moment you find yourselves proud owners of everything that can't be bought. You're blessed when you've worked up a good appetite for God. He is food and drink in the best meal you'll ever eat. You're blessed when you care. At the moment of being careful, you find yourselves cared for. You're blessed when you get your inside world, your mind and heart, put right. Then you can see God in the outside world. You're blessed when you can show people how to cooperate instead of compete or fight. That's when you discover who you really are and your place in God's family. You're blessed when your commitment to God provokes persecution.

The persecution drives you even deeper into God's kingdom. The Beatitudes are a diamond with eight faces. And like a diamond, it sparkles, enchants, and inspires, and it's worth all you can give. The eight faces of the diamond don't preach morality at us, telling us that we must be good boys and girls, and then God will bless us. Read them again and you'll notice they don't make any demands at all. They merely describe what it means to be a child of God. They paint a picture of what God's kingdom looks like in all its sparkling beauty. And in that way, they expand our hearts and blow our minds. So Jesus doesn't say, "You will be blessed if you try very hard to be merciful, and peace-keeping, and meek, and poor in spirit." Instead, those who are those things are blessed already. We are God's children now, and when we are living that truth, this is what we look like So let's take the diamond and put it under the jeweler's magnifier and examine it for its cut and its clarity. Look deeply, and this is what you see. You are poor in spirit when you allow others to take glory for your hard work and are not bitter. It is when you give, receive no thanks, but don't resent it. You are mournful when you sit in the wreckage caused by your poor decisions, uncontrolled impulses, or hasty reactions, and down there in the rubble, you discover your need for God. I am meek in those very rare moments when I state my needs without blaming, envying, or demanding. You are hungry and thirsty for righteousness when you look out on our broken, hurting world and are moved with compassion to do something about it. You are merciful when you have been wronged, and you have every right to get even, but you choose not to call in the debt, because for you, relationship is more

important than being right. You are pure in heart when you have integrity and transparency, and so let Christ's light reflect off you. You are the peacemaker when you say, "Enough. I've had enough of this. I am throwing down my weapons, the guns of malicious words, the bombs of angry looks, the missiles of vengeful thoughts. I am climbing out of the trenches and embracing my enemy." And you are persecuted for righteousness' sake. When you do all of this and are misunderstood or rejected, you are called weak or cowardly, naive or foolish, but you continue to live by the beauty of this diamond because you know that in this jewel rests the contented heart, the satisfied soul, the purposeful life In the Deep South, we sometimes have fascinating debates about whether to display the Ten Commandments publicly, and obviously I'm not gonna say anything about that. I just mention it because while I was writing this sermon this week, I found myself wondering why Christians don't talk about displaying the eight Beatitudes in public. I wonder which would be- which would have the greater impact on people's behavior: displaying the Ten Commandments or displaying the eight Beatitudes. You see, there's something almost comforting about God's words when they are clear-cut, explicit commands telling us what we should do and what we mustn't do. Hey, I made it through the day without killing anyone. Well, good for you. But did you hunger and thirst for righteousness today? Like, truly hunger and thirst for what is right in the way a starving person longs for food. Can you imagine walking into your place of work and seeing the Beatitudes hanging by the door? Or think of a child walking into school, or an elected politician

striding into the Capitol, a broker swaggering onto the trading floor, a ball team running onto the field, entertainers strutting down the red carpet into an awards ceremony, and instead of reading a sign that tells them not to steal, murder, lie, and commit adultery, they are given a vision of what they could be, the glorious jewels their lives could become, how they could change not just their workplaces, schools, and rooms of power, but the whole world in a way that religious laws cannot do. What might happen if those kids and politicians and business people and ballplayers and celebrities caught this glimpse of the Kingdom of God and it ignited a spark that gave birth to a holy and miraculous passion? You can change people's behavior by imposing laws, including religious laws, but they don't touch the heart. Jesus' diamond burrows into the center of our beings. It sheds light on our selfish motives, our self-serving actions, our negligence, our willful ignorance, our violence, our meanness, our self-righteousness, and it inspires us too with a vision of life at its best What if we saw these eight beatitudes displayed on the wall as we go into the voting booth on Tuesday? I'm just wondering. Under the law of I'm right and you're wrong, the law that governs the public life of our nation at the moment, the person you disagree with is a threat that must be defeated with aggressive words and posturing. But under the grace of the beatitudes, that person is my neighbor who must be engaged with mercy and humility. Henri Nouwen defines it well when he says, "Compassion grows with the inner recognition that your neighbor shares your humanity with you. This partnership cuts through all walls which might have kept you separate. Across the

barriers of land and language, wealth and poverty, knowledge and ignorance, we are one, created from the same dust, subject to the same laws, destined for the same end." The Beatitudes tell us that sometimes the most important question about life is not what, but how. The Beatitudes don't tell us what to think, but they tell us how to think it. The Beatitudes don't tell us what to believe about things like politics, but they do tell us how to talk about it. They don't tell us what to do with our money, but they do tell us how to handle its power. They don't tell us who's right and who's wrong, but they do tell us how you talk about others is vital. They don't tell us that we must win, but they do tell us how to play. They don't tell us that power is bad, but they do tell us that how we exercise it is critical. They don't tell us that we have to stay away from social media, but they do tell us that if we're going to use it, how we post our thoughts is crucial So hear the word of God today. Take the diamond, wear it, show it off, let its beauty reflect in your life, and enjoy being blessed. Amen