

to you All Hearts are open

*The Collect for
Purity, Book of
Common Prayer*

Reflection by The Rev. Matt Rhodes



The Rev. Matt Rhodes serves as deacon-in-charge of Christ Church, Millwood and is a 2017 graduate (M.Div.) of the Virginia Theological Seminary in Alexandria.

A native of Lynchburg, Virginia, he and his wife Amy are the proud parents of two daughters, Mary (13) and Ella (10), and currently live in the shadow of his beloved Blue Ridge Mountains.

I spent my childhood growing up in rural Central Virginia, a short distance from the Blue Ridge Mountains. Now, many years later, I have returned to those same mountains (although a bit further along the chain) and am privileged to serve as deacon-in-charge of a small parish nestled in their foothills. The mountains have always been a source of stability and blessing, a place to go for rest and reflection.

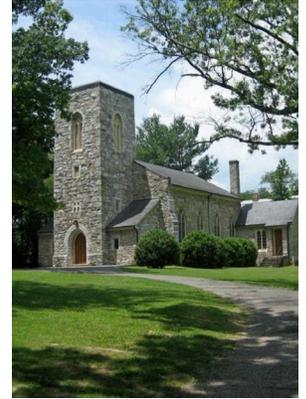
It is because of my lifelong attachment to the mountains that I am drawn to the “mountain moments” in the life of Jesus. For Jesus, mountains were where he could go to put distance between himself and the crowds and find solitude and a time apart for prayer. The mountains we visit through the exploration of the stories of our faith traditions can also be the source of many blessings. In this particular Gospel passage those who have followed Jesus to the mountain receive word of blessings they were likely not expecting.

In the beginning, the blessings are promised to those who are suffering in spirit, or are in mourning, or are feeling powerless. They will receive blessings because of what they are *living*. But then we see a turn. The blessings are now being bestowed because of what they are *giving* — the ones who walk with a pure heart, or who show mercy, or who seek to bring about peace. Blessings are bestowed on those who suffer because of the righteous lives they are leading, or persecuted for trying to walk through life in right relationship with their neighbors.

In this stewardship season, I have thought a great deal about the blessings I can bring to the lives of those who may not necessarily be feeling a sense of blessedness. But I also have reflected on the wonderful blessings that I may myself receive because of how and where I offer my gifts in the service of others. Being a faithful steward of my time and talent does not mean keeping them locked away for safe keeping; it means I am tasked with using them whenever and wherever possible for the benefit of others.

Climbing a mountain can be a source of great blessing, but it is only one source. As we discern how best to use our gifts, may we all be blessed through the dedication of our time, talent and treasure in the service of others.

All Saints Day |
Matthew 5:1-12



Reflection Question

When or where have you felt particularly blessed in your life? In reflecting on those moments, was the blessing received because of how you were *living* or because of what you were *giving*?

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