

# Morning Worship for 1 November 2020

from the United Reformed Church at Morpeth,  
Widdrington and Gt. Bavington

## Opening Words

“Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.” 1 John 3:2-3

## Hymn: 658 For all the saints

### Prayer of approach, thanksgiving and confession

Living God, this is a day of blessedness,  
when we take the opportunity to come together,  
to the very House of God,  
to give thanks for Your goodness and grace.

This is a day when we pause,  
to take note,  
to see and know what's around us,  
and to give thanks for Your many blessings.

We are blessed with life,  
the living, breathing life which is Your gift to us.

We are blessed with creation,  
the beauty and wonder of which is beyond our  
comprehension.

We are blessed with love,  
the ability to give love,  
and the joy of receiving it.

We are blessed with the Church,  
with the Community of God's Faithful People,  
with whom we are bound  
and in which we have our place.

We are blessed with the Gospel,  
with the Salvation won for us by Your Son, Jesus  
Christ.

Living God,  
we are richly blessed,  
and so we pause and give thanks  
for Your goodness and grace.

But above all and beyond all,  
in all and through all,  
we are blessed by Your Love –  
a challenging love;  
a rebuking love;

a healing love;  
an accepting love;  
a forgiving love.

So we are blessed again when we can confess our  
fallings,  
and hear Your words of love,  
“Arise sinner, and sin no more.”

So, as Your cloak of blessedness is cast around us once  
again,  
may we be drawn closer to You in the warmth of Your  
Spirit.  
As the light of Your blessedness shines upon us today,  
may we rise, wakeful and watchful,  
to share that blessedness with those around us.  
As the peace of Your blessedness restores our very  
soul,  
may we rest in You,  
knowing our blessedness is deep and secure.

These prayers we bring You,  
in and through the name of Jesus Christ our Saviour.  
Amen

### Reading: Psalms 34:1-10

### Reading: Matthew 5:1-12

### Introducing Cam

### Cam's bit

### Introducing Cam and Youth Work Project

### Hymn: 539 How blest are all the saints, our God

### Sermon

Our readings this morning remind us that what may seem to be success in this world, is not in God's eyes. And that the things we will think bring us happiness, are not the things in which God makes us happy.

We come to worship on what is All Saints Day, when we remember the heroes of our faith, who have been celebrated and venerated for the good things they have done in their lives. When we listen to the stories of the Saints, it is rarely through a life of luxury and leisure that they are brought to saint hood. Often it is through adversity and suffering, and in many cases in dying for their faith, in which they attain this almost divine status within our tradition.

When Jesus gives his sermon on the mount, he teaches the people what it means to be blessed by God. And again, it is not those living lives of luxury and leisure that are blessed, but those who suffer hardship

and adversity in this life. Such people Jesus calls blessed, or happy, and we consider today the things which we value that we believe will bring us true happiness.

You may have heard the story of the woman walking along the street one night, and came upon an elderly gentleman who had parked some way down the street, and who was walking around under the streetlight and gazing intently at the ground. She inquired as to what he was doing and he replied that he was looking for his car keys. She offered to help and started looking too.

After about 15 minutes of intense searching she asked, "Are you sure you dropped them over here?"

"No, I dropped them near my car" he replied  
"Well, why are you looking over here?" she responded barely able to hide her sarcasm. "Well because we'd never find them over there. There's no street light over there."

The readings I think speak to us today about the places we look for happiness. The places that the world shines its light upon but in which we will never find what it is we are looking for.

In Matthew's gospel, we read the familiar passage called the Beatitudes or the sermon on the mount. And Jesus shines a light here in the places we least expect, and reveals God to us in those places.

As Christians, we are often criticised by others for being miserable, for not having fun, for trying to stop others from enjoying themselves. Is religion sad and miserable? Well, maybe!??

But the Kingdom of God is very different. God wants us to be happy.

If we live in the kingdom, if we participate in the kingdom, then that is how God wants us to be – to lead the happy life.

Blessed means being made happy by God. And Jesus tells us that life in the kingdom should be filled with profound joy and happiness – and no matter what our circumstances might be – it is a joy that no person or no thing can take away.

When Jesus teaches his sermon, he is not saying, put up with the misery for now, because in a future life you will be happy. It is not some idealistic future joy and happiness that Jesus is talking about. It is a happiness that is within our grasp, right now.

Being blessed, being made happy by God, being filled with joy, are the marks of those who have really surrendered their lives to God and tasted his grace. If we trust our lives to God, then no matter what circumstances we find ourselves in, we will find that we are happy and blessed.

So let me ask you this morning – are you a potato or an egg?

Because I'm a bit like a potato, whereas those Saints that we talk about today are more like eggs. What am I talking about? I'm talking about the hot water that we get ourselves into. I'm talking about those situations when life turns up the heat and makes things just a little more uncomfortable.

When you place an egg in boiling water – it goes hard. When you place a potato in boiling water – it goes soft, and eventually turns to mush.

We read the stories of the saints, those heroes who face adversity and suffering, and come out with shining halos. Whereas, whenever I face such things in my life, inevitable I end up feeling a little like mush.

So are you a potato or an egg?

When you find yourself in boiling water, when life has turned the heat up, when things start to get a little uncomfortable. Are you strengthened and become tougher or do you crumble and dissolve.

Jesus says Happy are those who are poor in spirit. Through the OT and the Psalms the "Poor in Spirit" is a phrase that refers to those who have been ground down by society and by the political circumstances they find themselves in, and those whose confidence is only in God. Everything in life has failed them and the only thing they have left is to put their trust in God.

Jesus says Happy are those who mourn. Those who have seen the very depths of this world's suffering, those who have lost others, or lost themselves to sin, it is they who are wide open for the comfort that God longs to give.

Jesus says that victory does not go to the wise and powerful, but to those who are small before God. Happy are the meek, because God can afford to exalt them without danger of them getting proud.

Jesus shines a light in these areas of our lives, and in other areas where we do not expect to find happiness, and he says "Look, it is in these places that you may find God and in these things that God is able to make you happy. Then you will be surely blessed."

One quote on Happiness says that "Happiness is the by product of doing good things" Or you might like to say happiness is a by product of being a Saint. If we live our lives as God intends, then no matter what happens, we have the opportunity to be happy and blessed by God.

Many see the Beatitudes as a Christian Manifesto. Not a passive statement about the difficult situations in life that we might find ourselves in. Not a nice sermon to comfort those who might be suffering in various situations. But a call to be a people who actively participate in the kingdom, who like the saints, see the lives we live as an active expression of our love for God, and who by actively participating in this way, will find happiness.

Calling us to be poor in spirit and trust only in God  
Calling us mourn the loss of ourselves to sin.  
Calling us to be meek so that God can lift us up  
Calling us to hunger and strive for righteousness  
Calling us to be merciful  
Calling us to be pure in heart, devoted only to God  
Calling us be peacemakers, and to suffer persecution for righteousness sake.

This Psalmist says "Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed are those who take refuge in him. For the Lord, you his holy people, for those who fear him lack nothing. The lions may grow weak and hungry, but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing."

Let us be saints. Let us live lives which shine with the glory of God. And perhaps by doing this we shall find what we are looking for, and find that we are blessed for having done so.

#### **Prayer intercession - (based on the Beatitudes)**

God of all blessedness,  
we turn to You now with our prayers for others,  
seeking Your blessing on all for whom we pray.

You tell us:  
Blessed are the poor in spirit,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.  
So we pray for those whose spirit fails them,  
that they might be strengthened in their faith;  
for those whose poverty is physical,  
that they might have an equal share in the fruits of  
Your kingdom;  
for those whose outlook on life is poor,  
that they might have a glimpse of hope and purpose.

You tell us:  
Blessed are those who mourn,  
for they will be comforted.

So we pray for all who are cast down by grief –  
from recent losses or a deep-seated sorrow over  
many years –  
that they might know the comfort of hope,  
the comfort of love,  
the comfort of new life.

You tell us:  
Blessed are the meek,  
for they will inherit the earth.  
So we pray for leaders and followers,  
for big people and little people,  
for the proud and the humble,  
that in acceptance and grace,  
we might work together for the good of all.

You tell us:  
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after  
righteousness,  
for they will be filled.  
So, we pray that we,  
who seek to live in that very righteousness,  
might indeed be filled with wonder and joy in this very  
place.

You tell us:  
Blessed are the merciful,  
for they will receive mercy.  
So, let us forgive others  
that we might know and understand the true meaning  
of forgiveness.

You tell us:  
Blessed are the pure in heart,  
for they will see God.  
So, make our hearts pure with us,  
that we might know Your love all the more.

You tell us:  
Blessed are the peacemakers,  
for they will be called the children of God.  
So we pray for all who work for peace:  
peace in relationships;  
peace in communities;  
peace in politics;  
peace in places of conflict;  
peace for the body, mind and soul ...  
that all might see themselves  
and others as God's children.

You tell us:  
Blessed are those who are persecuted ...  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.  
So we pray for the broken and despised,  
the marginalised and the downtrodden,  
the victims and the dispossessed,  
the refugees and the homeless ...

this kingdom, our precious kingdom,  
belongs also to them.

And as we pray for others,  
we pray also that You will hold us always in  
communion  
with the Saints of all the ages,  
those who have been blessed  
and whose memories, example and closeness  
bless us, even at this present time.  
In Jesus' name we pray.  
Amen

### **Lord's Prayer**

### **Hymn CH4 748 As stars adorn the night-veiled sky**

Blessing  
Go now, with the blessings of the saints and angels.  
Go now, with the blessings of the people in this place.  
Go now, with the blessings of the whole people of  
God.  
Go now, with the blessings of God, Father, Son and  
Holy Spirit,  
now and always.  
Amen

*Prayers today taken from The Church of Scotland,  
produced by Rev Tom Gordon, Interim Moderator for  
Athelstaneford with Whitekirk and Tynninghame*