

Reflection Sunday 1st November

Matthew 5:1-12

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

'Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

'Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

'Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

'Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

'Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

These are some of the most well known phrases in the New Testament but what do they really mean for us today.

Earlier in the year, in a Bible study group in Kinver, we were reflecting on these verses. After 40+ years of reading them I realised that they were not a list of individual phrases but a progressive list of a spiritual journey.

It was not the physically poor who were blessed with the Kingdom of God – though let us not forget God's bias towards the poor. It is not the human doormat who inherits the things of earth.

It is when we realise that spiritually we are just about bankrupt that we are able to experience and accept the Kingdom of God. It is then that we mourn for our sins and wrongdoings and we can find the comfort we need through the grace and forgiveness of God. Once we realise that God knows best and submit to his will and purpose in meekness, we inherit what we truly need in life.

It is only when we have matured and worked our way closer to God through faith in Jesus that we can see persecution as a blessing and not something to be avoided at all costs.

In certain cultures and ages children "grow up fast" in recent months many have found their faith challenged and many have grown up fast as a result of testing times. As we are entering into a new time of "Lockdown" and the request to stay at home rings out once more we shall have more time to reflect on our faith and our relationship with Jesus. Why not try reflecting on these beatitudes not in a purely worldly physical sense but with Spiritual eyes opened. If you need some reading guidance then John Stott's *The Beatitudes: Developing Spiritual Character* " is a good place to start.

May the people of our country, and those around the world, be able to love their neighbour by thinking of the long-term well being of others before the short-term pleasure of their own.

We hold before God in prayer those for whom another Lockdown may cause a devastating change in their lives, mentally, financially, emotionally and physically. May they know his peaceful presence at all times.