
Sunday 1st November – The fourth Sunday before Advent

Readings: 1 John 3:1-3 & Matthew 5:1-12

1 John 3:1-3

See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. 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.

Matthew 5:1-12

Introduction to the Sermon on the Mount

Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them.

The Beatitudes

He said:

‘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 be shown 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 because of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

‘Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Reflection

I read the Beatitudes with new eyes today; it really felt like God is speaking right into our situation. Right at the very start, we’re told ‘When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up to a mountainside, and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach.’ He didn’t roll his eyes or try to escape the crowd or the pressure, he sat down, and taught some of the most beautiful, profound, and wise words.

Let’s notice how this starts with Jesus’ stillness, sitting on the mountainside. It’s a reminder that before wisdom, stillness has to come. Jesus’ words bring such peace to us. They are such a surprise. I bet no-one expected to hear ‘Blessed are the poor in spirit’. No body says that. Nobody thinks that! These words are so fresh. So life giving. Right now there are so many people who are poor in spirit. There is so much suffering and fear and uncertainty, however Jesus speaks right into this, with the promise that ‘for theirs is the kingdom of heaven’.

The kingdom of heaven is wherever God is. In it is peace and hope and mercy and joy and light and love and blessing and compassion. Everything that we need.

Jesus goes on and describes how in all of our struggles on earth, he will meet us and pour out his blessings upon us. ‘Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled’. It’s a promise to give us exactly what our hearts need. ‘Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth’ – no one else ever even notices the meek! They get ignored and passed over yet Jesus promises that they will inherit the earth.

This passage is such a wonderful demonstration of who Jesus is and what he is like. Read it again. Linger over it and identify where you fit into this. Ask the Lord what he is saying to you for this season. This morning reading through this reminded me of a gentle, loving and encouraging invitation into relationship with Jesus.

And this segways beautifully into our passage from 1 John. ‘See what great love the Father has lavished upon us that we should be called children of God’. It is such an honour to be adopted by God into his family. Let’s remember today that we have been chosen to belong. It is because we are adopted that God is our Father, and we can know him in this intimate way. We can come to him with our needs and our feelings and our struggles, and he cares for them as a loving Father does. And because we know him, we will recognise him when he comes again.

This line from verse 2 'but we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is' reminds me that Christ will come again. This is ultimately where we place our hope. That Jesus will come again, and there will be no more pain, no more suffering and no more injustice.

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