



GOSPEL GOSSIP

Jesus said: 'Blessed are...'

St Matthew 5. 1-12

Sunday 2 November

On this Sunday, many churches throughout the country will put aside the usual weekly gospel reading (this year from St Luke) and instead use this passage from St Matthew's gospel. This is because Sunday is what is called 'All Saints' Sunday', the day the Church gives thanks for all those whose lives on earth have been lived so much in line with the teachings and example of Jesus, that they are venerated (not worshipped) and their help for us struggling to live in their example today sought through our prayers.

The passage is often called the Sermon on the Mount. In it, Jesus is giving explicit teaching as to how people may best follow his example and emulate his life. These snapshots are called 'the Beatitudes' from the Latin word for 'blessed' – the same root of today's word 'beatify' – make blessed. As we listen to this simple but profound teaching, we should remind ourselves that we are all saints in the making. Every single one of us. But the start of this process is the acceptance that being holy is not something we can achieve through our own efforts, but through God's.

- Does it surprise you to think you are called to be a saint?
- Is a saint just someone well-known, long dead, and too good to be true?
- Who do you consider to be a saint – and why?
- Do you know any 'saints'?
- Why would you call someone 'blessed'?

However, if you look at the passage, it is not just a list of comforting platitudes that Jesus is dishing up for those who care to listen to him. He is not forcing a message on to the crowds; he is responding to their needs, he is feeding their hunger, in the same way that he would feed thousands of them physically. This crowd had built up and followed him because of his teaching and healing that he had performed amongst them.

What Jesus teaches is actually revolutionary. We shouldn't be surprised that the gospel is revolutionary. Christians must be revolutionaries. Rid yourself of the image of revolutionaries that we have today, people whose fanaticism sometimes stops at nothing. But rather think what 'revolution' actually means – a turning round as in revolving. All those people who are thought of as weak and pathetic are actually those who are closest to the kingdom of God. All those who were gathered around Jesus, being close to him – then and now. The gospel teaches us how to turn our lives around so that we can be happy and fulfilled, and true equality and peace may be achieved in big and little things, in a way that the world has clearly rejected with the obvious consequences.

- Do you believe that Jesus' teaching can transform your life and make you a 'saint'?
- Is the gospel consolation or empowerment?
- Are you prepared to turn your life around – do you want to?
- Where will you begin, or what more needs to be done?
- Have you ever considered Jesus a revolutionary?

Saints aren't those whose heads are so far in the heavens that their feet don't touch the ground. They are people like us all who have been changed by the revolutionary teachings of Jesus and have lived their lives by their faith, transformed and transforming. As we celebrate them, we renew our commitment to become more saint-like, trusting not in our own efforts, but God's. May the saints whose work on earth is over be an example for us, and pray for us to the one in whose presence they are eternally.