

Welcome and notices

- See Mark's June letter
- Daily morning and evening prayer resumes this week
- Taizé resumes on Fridays at 7.00 pm
- Contact Sally about both the above
- 8th June 10.00 am, Oaks Review Group
- 9th June 10.30 am Wednesday communion resumes
- 10th June TOTS are back!
- Next Sunday: Mark will be leading and preaching

Call to worship:

In my desperation I prayed, and the LORD listened; He saved me from all my troubles. For the angel of the LORD is a guard; he surrounds and defends all who fear him. Taste and see that the LORD is good. Oh, the joys of those who take refuge in him! Fear the LORD, you his godly people, for those who fear him will have all they need. Even strong young lions sometimes go hungry, but those who trust in the LORD will lack no good thing. (Psalm 34: 6-10)

SONG: Blessed be the name of the Lord

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PUtl3mNj5U>

Blessed be the name of the Lord
Blessed be the name of the Lord
Blessed be the name of the Lord Most High
Blessed be the name of the Lord
Blessed be the name of the Lord
Blessed be the name of the Lord Most High

The name of the Lord is a strong tower
The righteous run into it and they are saved
The name of the Lord is a strong tower
The righteous run into it and they are saved
Glory to the name of the Lord
Glory to the name of the Lord
Glory to the name of the Lord Most High

Glory to the name of the Lord
Glory to the name of the Lord
Glory to the name of the Lord Most High
The name of the Lord is a strong tower
The righteous run into it and they are saved
The name of the Lord is a strong tower
The righteous run into it and they are saved
Holy is the name of the Lord
Holy is the name of the Lord
Holy is the name of the Lord Most High
Holy is the name of the Lord
Holy is the name of the Lord
Holy is the name of the Lord Most High

Blessed be the name of the Lord
Blessed be the name of the Lord
Blessed be the name of the Lord Most High
Blessed be the name of the Lord
Blessed be the name of the Lord
Blessed be the name of the Lord Most High

Opening prayer

Blessed Lord, we are gathered here today before your throne of grace. We know we are so unworthy of the good things you've given us but, by the grace of Jesus, we have received these things and become glorified forever in Jesus' name. O God, we come to you for the forgiveness and sanctification of our hearts that only you can offer. As we continue with our service, let your presence overshadow us and let blessings all round be our portion. Amen.

Confession

Holy God, hear our prayer:

For the mending of our hearts, torn apart by our unkindness;

For the healing of our souls wasting away from the despair around us;

For the forgiveness we seek for the sin we have allowed to persist;

For the reconciliation of the world, whose divisions condemn us.

**We pray for the courage to admit our faults,
The strength to amend our actions,
And the hope that your grace awaits us.
Through Jesus Christ we pray, Amen**

Assurance of pardon

God is slow to anger and full of compassion. He forgives all who humbly repent and trust in his Son as Saviour and Lord. There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.
Amen.

Offertory prayer

For the blessings of this and all our days, we thank you, gracious God. Accept, we pray, not just this money but also our lives freely offered in gratitude for all you have done for us. Use them both, in this place and wherever you might take us. **Amen.**

SONG: Poor in spirit

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KW3PyxvMIKQ>

Make me poor in spirit; keep my heart down low,
Let me not grow weary, let my hunger grow.
Cause me not to stumble, keep me on my knees
Always needing you and poor in spirit please.

As I journey on through this life, I know you are near beside me like a shadow.
You will never leave me; you will never go, so my life I give it as a seed to sow
Keep me on the narrow, keep me on the straight, let me never sway and let me run this race. As to win the prize I will not give up, with a torch in one hand and a victor's cup.

Make me poor in spirit; keep my heart down low,
Let me not grow weary, let my hunger grow.

Cause me not to stumble, keep me on my knees
Always needing you and poor in spirit please.

With the wine of love and with the oil of grace
With a fire burning and a steady gaze
I will reap the harvest, I will love like you
Just keep me poor in spirit and in need of you.

Readings: Matthew 5:1-3

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

Psalm 51:17

My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Reflection: A better life (1)

Brokenness

Today we are starting a new theme that of a better life and looking at the beatitudes, part of the sermon on the mount. There is some doubt as to whether this is a single sermon or a regular theme that was preached on multiple occasions as it is core to Jesus' teachings. I have heard the beatitudes variously describe, as the beautiful attitudes or the be attitudes (two words, these are the attitude to be/have/exhibit), because they are the attitudes that sum up the conditions found in heaven and those to be practiced and developed by the Christians. Beatitude stems from the Greek word beatus, which we translate as blessed or bliss, happiness. But it is something that goes well beyond just being happy in our skin. As we live in an age given

to overblown hyperbole where everything is at scale, at speed or world beating let me reiterate the way I have seen it described as the standing ovation in heaven. Linguistically, the Greek is more emphatic than the English translation when it goes on to say for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. To get the emphatic sense of the Greek we perhaps need to add the word alone, so it becomes for theirs alone is the kingdom of heaven. One last thing to note before we get to the 6 words we are focussing in on today and that is the whole passage contains a stylistic device in that the first and last of the beatitudes end with the for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. This device shows us that the beatitudes are inclusive, so in some regards the first beatitude is a gateway blessing the rest follow on from it. The beatitudes are descriptions of what the kingdom of heaven and the people there will be like. This, though, is not just something for the future to be longed for, but it is something for the here and now and something to live our lives by. Turning to our topic for today that of brokenness we look at the first of the beatitudes, “Blessed are the poor in spirit for they will inherit the kingdom of heaven.” It’s an odd phrase even in church circles what are we to understand from it? What does it mean to be poor? Does, it mean we have to financial poor to understand it? Poor may mean we only have enough to get by on, take for example the story of the widow’s mite in Mark 12: 41 – 44 or Luke 21: 1 – 4 this shows us a woman who was undoubtedly poor, but she did have some meagre, incredibly meagre resources from which she sacrificially gave. Compare that to the story of Lazarus begging at the gates of the rich man. Lazarus was someone who had no resources at all and was forced to beg, he was totally dependent on the charity of the rich man he was completely broken he could not get any lower. That’s the kind of poor we

are talking about here absolute poverty of a spiritual kind. I like the treatment of this passage that The Message gives it when it paraphrases it as, “You are blessed when you are at the end of your rope. With less of you there is more of God and his rule.” This version tells us that when we are spiritually beggarly poor, when we are at our ropes end there is God is for you. It is the recognition that we are totally reliant of God for it is only through his grace that we are saved from the consequences of our sin. That is why we often talk about less of self and more of you Lord. The poor in spirit realize they are unable to respond to life’s trials, tribulations, and temptations by themselves in a way that is pleasing to God unless he enables them to grow into being overcomers. John of Kronstadt a Russian orthodox priest, writer, saint put it this way, “The man who is poor in spirit desires and will say with his whole heart, Hallowed be thy name, they kingdom come, they will be done as in heaven so on earth. It’s as though he himself disappears; everywhere and in everything he wishes to see God in himself and others. Let everything be thine and not mine.” The poor in spirit are those who put God before self, they recognise their spiritual poverty, their utter reliance on the charity of God, his grace for their salvation, Christ’s sacrifice for our eternal life. That’s the type of poverty we need so that in all that we do we seek to raise up Christ.

Now I said earlier blessed is like the standing ovation in heaven and now I am going to add a warning to that phrase and the warning comes from CS Lewis not me. He said, “Catch a man when he is really poor in spirit and smuggle into his mind the gratifying reflection, ‘By Jove – I’m being humble’ and almost immediately pride, pride at his own humility will appear. Not only is it a warning but it also introduces another concept for the

poor in spirit that of humility, this needs to be a truly humble attitude. Not the humility of say Uriah Heep in David Copperfield who goes about telling everyone how 'umble he is while all the while trying to undermine them and rip them off. Our humility is in recognising our need for God, it needs to be a sincere humility not the insincere humility of Uriah Heep.

The beatitudes are also striking in that they turn the worlds expectations on their heads. They contradict the worlds expectations like so much else in Christs teaching they run counter culturally. Show me an example in this world when the weak defeated the powerful, the meek are not simply walked over by the more dominant, the poor earn the greatest reward, the kingdom of heaven. Take for example when in Matthew 18: 1 – 4 Christ says unless you become like a child you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. How can we become a child again, can we get back in our mothers' womb and be born again? Children, especially very young children are dependent on their parents to feed them, change them, wash, and dress them. Eventually as the child grows, they learn to feed and dress themselves, comb their hair brush their teeth, etc in the natural course of events. Such that children become less dependent on their parents and more independent. This is the natural progression of things in this world from dependency to independence. However, the Christian journey is in the other direction isn't it. It's from independence our self-reliance to dependency relying on God.

The topic as I said is about brokenness and for many Christians their conversion comes when they reach the end of their rope or tether, when they are utterly and completely broken. And this is where the reading from Psalms comes in. You might think of conversion

testimonies you have heard from drug addicts or criminals whose lives have been turned completely around through meeting Christ. Not everyone's conversion story is that dramatic I know and perhaps it's pride in our own self-reliance that needs to be swept away, that barrier need to be broken in us, before can recognise our sinful nature and our need for God grace to save us from sin and ourselves. In our spiritual beggarliness we can see our need for Christ's sacrifice and God's mercy and gratefully accept the gift he came to bring us from the father. In accepting Christ into our lives we also need to see our lives being changed if we want to change our eternal destination. I am sure we can all think of people who professed Christ as their Lord and saviour and yet have not changed their lives in any way. If we skip to the end of the sermon on the mount, then in Matthew 7: 22 – 23 we see a warning about such behaviour. It's a very stark warning to us in that Christ says there will be some who profess him as lord, who have done good works, that he will not recognise because they have not really changed their lives, or their hearts and they continue to live in iniquity. They still prefer the temporary gratification from their sinful ways to the permanent gratification that through living for Christ.

What does it mean to be poor in spirit and why are they blessed? It is because the poor in spirit:

1. Recognise their own utter helplessness and complete dependence on God. This the direct opposite of the self-made man image beloved especially here and in the US. If the spirit of self takes charge, then there is no room left for the Holy Spirit to enter in and take us where he will.
2. Are sincerely humble in recognising their utter dependency on God for their salvation

3. Grow in maturity as they grow increasingly more dependent on God
4. Live with the attitudes that they will find in heaven bringing heaven closer to them.

So, my questions to myself and all of us are these:

1. Do we long to be spiritually poor?
2. Do we recognise our utter dependence on God for our salvation?
3. Are we grateful for the completely undeserved gift of life eternal, being saved from the consequences of our sin?
4. Are we humble and sincere in turning to Christ, have our lives changed?
5. Do we continue to grow in our dependency on God?
6. Do we live in the ways of this world or do we live as if we are already in heaven? It's a glorious hope and reward that we can have now and in eternity.

To paraphrase Churchill never has so much meaning been imbued to so few words. Only six, count them blessed are the poor in spirit, yet those few words capture what it means to follow Christ, to be inheritors of the kingdom of heaven, now and for eternity. Hasn't that got to be a better life.

Shall we close in prayer.

Lord, give us a humble and repentant heart. In our weakness may we be grateful for your grace and mercy. In our journey through life may we live so that it is less about ourselves and more about you. May we recognise our spiritual poverty, turning to you and changing our lives, our hearts, and our motivation consequently. May all we do be done so as to lift you up before mankind that all may see you. **Amen**

SONG: O taste and see

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yOzf0VrDNGU>

I sought the Lord
And He answered me
And delivered me
From every fear
Those who look on Him
Are radiant
They'll never be ashamed
They'll never be ashamed
This poor man cried
And the Lord heard me
And saved me from
My enemies
The Son of God
Surrounds His saints
He will deliver them
He will deliver them
Magnify the Lord with me
Come exalt His name together
Glorify the Lord with me
Come exalt His name forever
Oh, taste and see
That the Lord is good
Oh, bless us here
Who hides in Him?
Oh, fear the Lord
Oh, all you saints
He'll give you everything
He'll give you everything
Magnify the Lord with me
Come exalt His name together
Glorify the Lord with me
Come exalt His name forever
Let us bless the Lord
Every day and night
Never-ending praise
May our incense rise
Let us bless the Lord
Every day and night
Never-ending praise
May our incense rise
Let us bless the Lord

Every day and night
Never-ending praise
May our incense rise
Let us bless the Lord
Every day and night
Never-ending praise
May our incense rise
Magnify the Lord with me
Come exalt His name together (lift up His
name together)
Glorify the Lord with me
Come exalt His name forever (lift up His name
forever)
Magnify the Lord with me
Come exalt His name together (exalt His name
together)
Glorify the Lord with me (oh, Lord, with me)
Come exalt His name forever
Ooh...

Prayers if intercession

Gracious God, take from us
any anxiety we might face
as this day, with all its baggage,
opens the door and enters in.
May we see opportunities
that yesterday were missed,
blessings in the little things
we might normally walk past;
time enough to set aside
a space to read your Word,
say a prayer, sing a song,
strengthen faith and know
you're there, always there,
whatever this new day might bring.
You have work for us to do
today, Lord. Getting hands
dirty kind of work. Being
there when needed, ready
to get stuck in kind of work.
Being your hands comforting,
healing, embracing but also
exposing injustice and wrong.
Being your feet, walking

alongside the marginalised,
the struggling and the weak.
Being your voice encouraging
those who stumble in the dark
to reach out and embrace the light.
You have work for us to do, Lord.
Grant us strength and wisdom.
Bless all who work in stressful situations;
healthcare, teaching, law enforcement,
social services and other occupations
where patience, love, and perseverance
can wear thin and daily stress levels rise.
Keep them safe and keep them well,
equipped to follow their vocation
through the most difficult of times.
And at the end of their day, Lord, grant rest.
Loving God, what we desire is this;
that people see not us, but through
our smile, greeting, helping hand
or helpful word, your love reach out
and touch, maybe at a time of need.
Keep us focussed through this day
on being your servants in this place,
or wherever you might take us,
and may your name be glorified.
And in our darker moments,
when clouds gather
and the heaviness we feel
seems overwhelming,
remind us of your love,
carrying the weight
of so much in that cross,
embracing the world
with arms outstretched
that we might know
freedom from the chains
which now constrain us.
Bring us to your light,
release our burdens
and from despair bring hope.

In togetherness and isolation,
may your love be the thread
that connects us.

All these things we pray in the name of Jesus,
Our Lord, our Saviour, and our Friend. **Amen.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has
taught us:

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen.**

SONG: Seek ye first the Kingdom of God

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FFxZeY2D5tc>

Seek ye first the Kingdom of God
And His righteousness
And all these things shall be added unto you
Allelu Alleluia
Ask and it shall be given unto you
Seek and ye shall find
Knock and it shall be opened unto you
Allelu Alleluia
Al - le - lu - ia
Al - le - lu - ia
Al - le - lu - ia
Al - le - lu Al - le - lu - ia
Al - le - lu Al - le - lu - ia

Closing prayer and blessing

Let us go forth into the world in peace and
dedicated to your service, Lord. Let us hold
fast to that which is good, render to no
person evil for evil, strengthen the faint-
hearted, support the weak, help the needy
and the afflicted, and honour all people. Let
us love and serve the Lord, rejoicing in the
power of His Spirit. And may God's grace be
upon us and remain with us always. **Amen.**

And now may the blessing of God Almighty,
Father Son and Holy Spirit, be with us and all
those we love, all those we care for, and all
those we pray for, this day and ever more,
Amen.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
In the name of Christ, Amen.