

May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of all our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord our strength and our redeemer. Amen.

Last week saw us put away our green and say good-bye to ordinary time.

What is extraordinary is our present is anything but ordinary.

The worry and the strain of living under the threat of the virus and what it will mean if we catch it.

We wait with bated breath for news tomorrow whether we face another national lockdown.

Our gospel reading this morning reveals in the Sermon on the Mount that real happiness is a result not a goal, you find it when you are looking for something else and the something else that you need to be looking for is the Kingdom of God.

Sermon

Matthew 5. v 1-12 November 1st 2020

System 10am

Matthew goes on to say in v 6 – “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well”.

So if you are devoting your life to the pursuit of happiness you have as much chance as you would pursuing the Holy Grail, we know that it should be out there somewhere but we just can't seem to find it.

And so Christ begins by telling us “Happy are those who are poor in spirit, and Happy are those who mourn. Not your average everyday concept of happiness is it? And yet we can look back and think of those who have died with joy and a semblance of joy for all that they were.

Christ adds to those thoughts these words in v5 ‘Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth’.

When I was preparing this sermon all I could think of the film ‘life of Brian’.

The scene in the film when Jesus goes up the hill and starts talking. He has no microphone and his voice only carries so far. People at the back are having conversations and arguments. In the mist of this one woman manages to hear 'Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth'.

She in turn says to her husband and those near her and proclaims -

"Oh it's the meek - blessed are the meek!

Oh that's nice innit. I'm glad they're getting something. Coz they have hell of a time

Blessed are the meek.

That statement is totally contradictory to our entire way of thinking.

We figure that if the meek are going to inherit the earth it's only because nobody else will want it in the state it's in. Especially in our crippling pandemic world as is.

For a lot of people, meek means weak and none of us wants to be thought of as weak. You probably won't find a pile of people lined up for "Meekness Training"

Our experience has shown us that the meek won't inherit the earth.

The multinational corporations, the slick politicians, (cast your eye over the 'pond'), the multi-married movie stars, the military dictators, they are the ones who will inherit the earth. Aren't they?

There doesn't seem to be much hope that we'll hear let alone **heed** Christ's third suggestion for happiness.

In our modern English the word meek paints a picture of a submissive and ineffective creature. However, in the Greek it is one of the great ethical words meaning somewhere between excessive anger and excessive angerlessness.

Aristotle saw it as the happy medium and the possible translation could be:

“Blessed is the man who is always angry at the right time, and never angry at the wrong time.”

Another way to look at the original word for meek is to realize that it can also be translated to gentle and gentle is a relational term. It has to do with our relationships with ourselves and with others.

The meek are gentler with themselves. It's not that they forsake all efforts at self-improvement., but their aspirations and achievements flow out of a relaxed centre.

We can be gentle with ourselves when we realize that we have been called and claimed by God Himself.

We have worth independent of what the world may think.

To return to the sermon on the Mount -

The sermon on the Mount is nothing less than the concentrated memory of the many hours of heart to heart communion between the disciples and their Master.

The beatitudes describe a way of life that is not unworldly, but immensely worldly and in the thick of things. Poverty, meekness, persecution – all attributes seen as failure but qualities visible in Jesus' earthly life and also in the lives of many saints.

We cannot live the beatitudes without getting messy, because they involve living amid the grief and mourning for a world that is not as it should be, in the midst of this pandemic as well as unjust and unrighteous situations.

Who says that our children here in our community should go hungry when they are not in school?

In the places where mercy is missing, where there is no peace, where purity of heart is undermined at every turn, where power-hungry people scorn and manipulate meekness for their own ends.

People who live this way, the saints we remember on today - All saint's day, lived and indeed live risky lives as fully and as passionately as they can.

In a sense they gamble with their lives for the sake of Jesus Christ.

Saints who live in the way of the beatitudes also have a sense of balance between heaven and earth.

They know that our present, in all its trial of Covid, counts in God's purposes. Are some religious people so heavenly minded they are no earthly good?

Some non-Christian people are very earthly minded, driven by an admirable desire to fight the injustice they see, but with no knowledge of the ultimate redemption of all creation in Christ.

Some say a Saint is someone who can move between the heavenly and earthly worlds, totally immersed in each, letting each inform the other as the light of heaven shines through their lives.

So, do we try to emulate the saints who have gone before us, thereby adding to their number.

Let us pray

All-Powerful and ever-living God,
today we rejoice in the holy men and women
of every time and place.

May their prayers bring us your forgiveness and love
How shining and splendid are your gifts, O Lord
which you give us for our eternal well-being
Your glory shines radiantly in your saints, O God

Thank you, God, for the sacrifices made by those who
have gone before us.

May we learn how to walk wisely from their examples of
faith, dedication, worship, and love.

We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen