

All saints Sunday

Today we celebrate all the saints, that great cloud of witnesses, who in the company of God encourage us, and urge us on, in our earthly and spiritual journey. Yes we are on a journey. It's a journey that can be tough and challenging, where we struggle for all we can get in terms of survival, material possessions, well being, happiness. We naturally want the best out of life and we try our best to get it. But too often we think that the best in life can only come from the world we live in; it's all out there and we try to rake in what we can. Perfectly normal. Sometimes when we do well in the raking in stakes, we sit down and rest, put our feet up like the man who had the bumper harvest and built new barns to store his grain. 'This is it, I've won the lottery, I'll enjoy myself now.'

But of course even if we're doing ok in life, there is no guarantee that the world can give us more. And more of what? More worldly wealth? More satisfaction and enjoyment? More of the happy medium, or more of the same?

When we think of the saints of the church, the example of their lives might remind us that true riches are from heaven. The saints who are urging us on are trying to tell us that. The richest person can be the poorest and the poorest person can be the richest. Earthly poverty is something we should always want to tackle. It's not something we should ever wish on people or be satisfied that 'this is just the way it is.' However, there are many stories of poor people who have different kinds of riches. People who feel that God is there for them and looking after them. They might be impoverished, they might have next to nothing, but there is a peace and contentment about them. Poverty might not be good, but peace and contentment? Now that's good! And many in such a position in our world, have the faith that God has something in store for them that just hasn't been revealed yet. Indeed if we look at 1 John we hear. 'Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed.' That's an exciting prospect for all of us if we believe that we are children of God. And being children of God, for all the good we might be fortunate to receive from the world, there is more to receive from God. What we don't have in this world, or what we choose to renounce, give up in this world, leaves within us an empty space that can only be filled by God.

Today in Matthew's Gospel we have Jesus speaking the beatitudes in the sermon on the mount to his disciples in the presence of the crowds. Similarly we have the version of the beatitudes in Luke's Gospel, where the wording, a little different goes as such.

'Blessed are you who are poor,
for yours is the kingdom of God.
Blessed are you who are hungry now,
For you will be filled.
Blessed are you who weep now,
For you will laugh.'

The poor person who has faith in God, is not blessed because of their social class. In that sense they are not blessed and the kingdoms of this world have offered them little. But they are blessed because they have entered into another kingdom. The kingdom of Heaven! And all of those who might not be circumstantially poor, but choose to be poor in spirit, in other words, poor to the world, a world that offers much, both good and bad; all are blessed when they allow the words Jesus speaks today, to become a reality in their lives.

Blessed are the merciful,
Blessed are the pure in heart
Blessed are the peacemakers
All challenging ways to live our life and not just a piece of cake to abide by.
And it gets even more challenging when we hear.
'Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness..

Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.'

That sounds like a tough time in a world where people are challenging to those who are listening to the preacher on the mount. You and I?

But let's remember, Jesus is offering another kind of world to us and he is saying that wherever we might be unfortunate in our lives; wherever we might be facing times of trial; we are blessed, because Jesus blesses us when we are in need. In need of comfort; in need of mercy; in need of peace and in need of him.

So let us light the candle of our hearts to the saints and like them follow another way. A radical way that doesn't match the world with like for like, but challenges the existing state, to offer the perfect state. The state of being blessed.

Amen.