

All Saints Day

Matthew 5.1-12

Revelation 7.9-17

All Saints day reminds us that we are living in a mystery, God's mystery.

John's vision in Revelation takes us into this mystery. John had a vision of unending worship in heaven that we join every time we gather for worship here on earth. So we are not just spending time which begins at 8.00am and ends at 8.35am; we are joining in, for 35 minutes, with the eternal worship of heaven, and occasionally we are lifted out of ourselves and caught up in something bigger, greater than our corporate effort.

In apparent contrast we hear difficult words spoken by Jesus to his disciples at the start of the famous Sermon on the Mount. They are known as Beatitudes because they all begin with the word 'Blessed'. They are not directives about how we should live but statements of fact which invite us to see how people who are fully in tune with Jesus actually live. And being in tune with Jesus means living fully immersed in earthly life, with sleeves rolled up. These people are merciful, they mourn, they are peacemakers, they hunger and thirst for righteousness, they are reviled and persecuted.

However, their perspective is that of heaven. They know that this life is not all there is, but that grief will be comforted, righteousness will come in fullness, the pure in heart will see God, the peacemakers will be called children of God, and

they have a reward in heaven. This perspective frees them from having to seek reward in this life and thus enables them to be more fully involved because they have no ulterior motive, other than to live as those who know they are blessed by God.

The Beatitudes describe a way of life that is not unworldly but immensely worldly. But it isn't about worldly success. It doesn't say 'Blessed are the rich' or the famous or the beautiful or the intelligent. It is about getting messy, living amid the grief and mourning for a world that is not as it should be, in the midst of unjust and unrighteous situations, in places where mercy is missing, where there is no peace. Today we remember and honour the saints throughout the ages who have lived this way, and some who live this way today, living risky lives as fully and passionately as they can.

Some religious people are so heavenly minded that they are no earthly use, and some non-Christian people are very earthly minded, driven by an admirable desire to right the injustice they see, but with no knowledge of the ultimate redemption of all creation in Christ. A saint is someone who can inhabit both heavenly and earthly worlds, totally immersed in both, letting each inform the other as the light of heaven shines through their lives. So we pray that we may emulate the saints who have gone before us, and add to their number.