

St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall

www.stmagnus.org

Scottish Charity SCO 05322/CCL No 119086

www.facebook.com/StMagnusCathedralCongregation

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Welcome to St Magnus Cathedral this morning. It was founded in 1137 by St Rognvald, in honour of Magnus, his uncle. The Cathedral belongs to the people of Orkney and its doors are open to all. If you are a visitor, we hope this order of service will help you feel part of our worship together.

SUNDAY 11th July 21

You can find our Sunday worship here.

<https://www.facebook.com/StMagnusCathedralCongregation/>

or on YouTube here.

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here.

stmagnuszoom@gmail.com

Welcome

As we light our flame this morning:
we celebrate by its warmth
the depth and breadth of our congregation.
And we celebrate by its light
the faith we share.

Meditation

Don't rush into joy,
Death needs grieving,
Beliefs deserve thinking about, Mulling over,
Considering.

hearts need warming,
The soul needs stirring
Strength needs building
Mind needs stretching.
All our heart, soul, strength and mind.
Truth takes time,
To be revealed,
To be understood.
Blind faith is no faith.
Faith seeks understanding. Faith wrestles before it
rests.
Belief isn't knowing the answers, Belief is asking the
questions. Belief is an adventure into
the ever unfolding unknown.
Living with paradox. Letting go of certainty. Enjoying
faith's journey.
Breaking with old ways and building new. Being, becoming
and growing -
Learning,
and turning -
Towards the Light.

Reading Matthew 5; 1-10

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on the
mountainside, and after he sat down and the disciples had
gathered around, Jesus began to teach them:
"Blessed are those who are poor in spirit:
the kingdom of heaven is theirs.
Blessed are those who are mourning:
they will be consoled.
Blessed are those who are gentle:
they will inherit the land.
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice:
they will have their fill.
Blessed are those who show mercy to others:
they will be shown mercy.
Blessed are those whose hearts are clean:
they will see God.
Blessed are those who work for peace:
they will be called children of God.
Blessed are those who are persecuted
because of their struggle for justice:
the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

Reflection

Listening on the Mount to Jesus as he presents 'The Beatitudes' must have been as much of a problem for the gathered crowd as it is today for us trying to make sense of what we might call a 'counter-cultural' list.

In the Jewish influenced society of the day, however, the people listening would not have had any problem with the notion of what it means to be 'blessed'. They would get the fact that what Jesus was inferring was not a state of happiness correlating to worldly circumstances (a happiness that is fleeting and fickle); but instead his words indicated a description of the spiritual attitude and condition of people who are aware of the God within them.

The problem for these people listening, and for us today, is with the categories of people listed by Jesus as those who find it easiest to be 'right with God'. This is where the 'counter-cultural' list comes in. What we have here is Jesus painting a picture that is a paradox to our own way of assessing life. We assume certain circumstances of life lead to a better experience of life and a greater sense of being blessed. The beatitudes subvert these assumptions and make us ponder our aspirations. There is nothing glamorous in this list of circumstances within which a person is blessed.

It is good and encouraging that those who find themselves in these experiences can be made right with God and will know themselves blessed. For these people we are grateful that Jesus comes with a Gospel of Good News. For the majority of us however, whose experience of life from a worldly point of view is generally better than the experiences of the people referred to here, the problem is how easy is it for us to be made right with God?

In the context of what Jesus is saying is it possible for a rich man, a bold confident person, a happily married woman, a soldier, a well-liked person to be blessed? The list of those mentioned in the sermon of Jesus does not include those people whose lives are 'all-right'!

The easiest thing for us to do is to satisfy ourselves by saying Jesus only picked out a few groups for the inferred state of being blessed and there must be many more people and groups who will find themselves made right with God. That is the easy way but nonetheless the text asks us not just to accept an easy way of interpretation. Nobody ever said the study of scripture should be easy or indeed comfortable. Perhaps as we ponder these things we are meant to stretch our minds and assess our aspirations and assumptions about where blessing is found.

In relation to the context of Jesus' words we can point to the fact that Matthew is steeped in Hebrew tradition. The way that he frames the Sermon of Jesus bears direct

correlation to the promised Messiah of the Old Testament who would bring 'good news for the poor'. The similarity between the Beatitudes and Old Testament passages (such as Isaiah chapter 61) are striking. In his words Matthew points to Jesus as the fulfilment of the promise of the Messiah: the one who brings in the Way of Christ. As we consider these words we will find a multitude of different angles by which to interpret these ten verses and apply a conclusion to our life, world and discipleship. That is the beauty of Biblical texts. We can explore the words in a way that resonate with a specific thought we have in our mind. As we prise open a particular aspect of the text we discover a window to something important for us to consider. Sometimes the window allows us to see a big picture, sometimes just a small one, but it always reveals something that helps us on our journey.

Prayer

in a world filled with people seeking to be the best,
to have all of the answers,
to be the one who has it altogether... may the Spirit
speak into this moment of quiet. Help us be still in the
presence
and listen to Christ and Christ alone..

In a world where people follow others blindly, because of
their slogans, their manifestos, their looks, their
singing voices, their skills on the pitch...
may the Spirit speak into this moment of quiet. Focus us
on the Way.
Help us listen to Christ and Christ alone

May we follow the one with the true manifesto:
to bring good news to the poor,
to bind up the broken-hearted,
to proclaim freedom for the captives
and release from darkness for the prisoners.
In a society where it is so hard to discern
who is right and who is wrong,
may the Spirit be with us in our decision making.
Be with those in positions of responsibility and power
in their moments of decision making.
Help the world to hear truth, to seek justice
and to act justly.
In his name we ask all these things.
In him we put our trust.

Blessing

We go our separate ways secure in the knowledge of the
love of Christ
and in the midst of all of life's uncertainties.
We go to share that love with others

**May you stay safe in the Way of Christ, and may you be blessed by his Spirit
this day and always.**