**Morning Praise @ Home 16th February 2025**

**Opening prayer**

Blessed are you, God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, you have blessed us with every spiritual blessing; enable us by your power to be true to our calling and live holy and blameless lives before you all our days, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. **Amen**

**Confession** Let us admit to God the sin which always confronts us.

**Lord God, we have sinned against you; we have done evil in your sight. We are sorry and**

**repent.** **Have mercy on us according to your love. Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us**

**from our sin.** **Renew a right spirit within us** **and restore us to the joy of your salvation,** **through**

**Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen** cf Psalm 51

**Absolution** May the Father of all mercies cleanse us from our sins, and restore us in his image

to the praise and glory of his name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

### Bible Reading Luke 6:17 – 27

### Reflection from Philip

**Jesus gives us instructions for a happy and fulfilled life**

We heard some instructions in our reading this morning, from Luke 6.

Known variously as The Beatitudes, The Sermon on the Mount in Matthew, or The Sermon on the Plain in Luke, the account in Matthew’s gospel is longer and has a different emphasis. Luke stresses a heavenly idea of happiness, a picture of the abundant life God wants us to enjoy. In this heavenly economy, those who are poor, hungry and weeping and hated are happy.

The different gospel writers had their own concerns and distinctive emphasis and language – though, of course, Jesus almost certainly preached his message more than once – just as John, our vicar, will have possibly preached along similar lines more than once in his long career!

This is early in Jesus’ ministry – he has chosen his disciples and is now setting out a framework for living.

This was his first talk to the newly appointed disciples – and he used the opportunity to explain to them about a different type of Kingdom than the political kingdom and overthrow of the occupying Romans which they had associated with the long-expected Messiah.

He gave them these lessons in a memorable way for the newly selected Apostles to carry in their spiritual backpack as they travelled, spreading the word of God.

Jesus had gone up a mountainside for some quiet time to reflect and pray. Jesus needed these quiet times as he was being followed by big crowds all the time. In fact Luke says all the crowd wanted to touch Jesus as there was power that came from him.

He stayed up on that mountainside all night, and then he called and selected the twelve disciples. A huge crowd (of both Jews and non-Jews – Luke stresses that, as he wanted to reach out to non-Jews) had gathered as he came down the mountain, people from far and wide who hoped to see miracles or to see him cast out demons – or something else dramatic!

Now who else can you think of in the Bible who went up a mountain and came down with some rules for life? Yes – Moses! Just as Moses taught the people of Israel from the mountain after he had received the Ten [Commandments](https://www.churchofengland.org/node/3940), so Jesus went up a mountain to pray, then came down to teach his new disciples and the huge crowd.

All self-respecting Jews would have been familiar with the laws of Moses and the prophets – it was a key part of what we now call The Old Testament. A good and devout Jew would look to follow these rules, and in many ways, abiding by The Law was what defined the Jewish culture and set them apart from non-Jews.

But Jesus didn’t simply update the Old Testament laws for the difficult days of the Roman occupation of Israel. He challenged his disciples – and the crowd, with a series of statements that challenged many of the established views of what a blessed and happy life should look like. In fact these were not laws, but Jesus painting a picture to his disciples and the crowd about life in The Kingdom of God – of what the priorities should be in your life.

Some of these sayings are difficult to understand, and some are as uncomfortable for us today as they would have been to Jesus' first hearers. Jesus was being radical – even subversive and revolutionary. He suggested a topsy-turvey, upside-down world compared to what society expected then – and that’s still true today.

Jesus contested the wrong ideas about the Jewish [Messiah](https://bibleask.org/how-can-we-be-certain-that-jesus-is-the-messiah/)’s kingdom that had been instilled in the minds of the people by the Jewish religious leaders. Jesus was setting out a different type of Messiah.

Luke’s account is sometimes described as focusing on issues of material poverty (whereas Matthew is more on spiritual poverty).

So what’s so great about poverty?!

Let’s consider our perspective on these verses, from here in the affluent West. Perhaps we have a reduced dependence and focus on God compared to, say, those in the developing world. All our possessions and all the distractions of wealth can create a barrier. We don’t like reading about all the woes that Jesus refers to.

How might those in the developing world read these verses? Maybe they are comforted by hearing of the woes those in the affluent West have – everything isn’t as rosy as they like to make out!

Jesus is showing us an upside-down world – we look through the spectacles which he gives us to see and understand the world and the Kingdom of God. It’s completely counter-cultural.

We have to get used to looking through the world this way – like having a new pair of spectacles that we need to get used to! They change how we understand all that is going on in our lives and of those around us.

The woes are a challenge for us to hold on lightly to our material wealth – and we have so much.

The hard lesson is that when we have experienced difficult times in our lives, often, that’s when we really get to rely on God alone, and we can become closer to God. When things are more comfy, we can lose that dependence on God, that radical edge…

What does **Blessed** mean? We use it when someone sneezes!

Perhaps **‘Fortunate’** is a better word – you are fortunate when you realise there is a problem because then you realise you are in need, like going to the doctor when you are ill.

It’s because of recognising one’s need and fragility that people open themselves to finding blessings in Jesus. Maybe ‘**Enviable’** is a better word…?

Blessedness is a state in the Kingdom of God. This is an upside-down view of the world – but actually, it’s the right way up!

We are, in fact, seeing glimpses of living a life in accordance with The Kingdom of God, of not just following the world's priorities.

**How can we live out the Beatitudes?**

Some can be fulfilled in this life, but some perhaps only fully lived when God’s Kingdom is fulfilled. Some are hard to follow in this life – I challenge any of you to ‘leap for Joy’ as we read in Luke’s account - when you are being hated or excluded.

But these are the foundations for living a Christ-like life, for true discipleship - not following the misguided priorities and standards of this world.

A guide to achieving a fulfilled and happy life and indeed, much of Luke’s take in his account of the Gospel is one of Joy. **Amen**

### Affirmation of faith

Do you believe and trust in God the Father, source of all being and life, the one for whom we exist?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Son, who took our human nature, died for us and rose again?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit, who gives life to the people of God and makes Christ known in the world?

**We believe and trust in him. This is the faith of the Church.**

**This is our faith. We believe and trust in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen**

**Prayers of intercession led by Rachel**

Lord, we thank you for the chance to worship you this morning. Help us to reflect on our learnings: That you care for those who are living with poverty, hunger, grief and rejection.

We give thanks for all that has been provided to each one of us here and long to receive your blessing. Teach us to understand that by giving, we are receiving.

Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer**

As spring approaches, grant us the courage to embrace change and the wisdom to navigate new paths. Fill our hearts with hope and determination. Help us to choose to be your disciples, to be rooted in you rather than ourselves or our circumstance, so we can bear fruit.

Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer**

Father, we pray for peace:

For peace of mind for all those who are vulnerable, desperate and in despair - that they might know your love.

For peace between individuals, families, neighbours, leaders and nations. To ease suffering and the effects of conflict, terrorism and persecution, so lives can be rebuilt.

And finally, for peaceful moments, so we can hear your voice and become closer to you.

Merciful Father, **accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen**

**The Lord’s Prayer** As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

***Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come,******Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen***

**Closing prayer**

God give you grace to become the people He has called you to be, that you may live and work to his praise and glory, and the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us and remain with us always. **Amen**

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