**Morning Praise @ Home 29th January 2023**

**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 Readings Micah 6: 1 – 8 Matthew 5: 1 – 12

**Reflection from Ruth**

I have recently had a DNA test that shows I have the gene for coeliac disease.

From what I know now, it’s pretty clear that my mother had undiagnosed coeliac disease and she was very unwell for the last 20 years of her life.
And I have found that I have been grieving for those final years, when they didn’t get the medical treatment that’s available today. My mother has been dead for quite a few years, but I am grieving for her.

And it doesn’t feel like a blessing.

There are people who are mourning or grieving today who don’t feel blessed.
Those in our society who are suffering from social injustice don’t feel blessed.

The persecuted don’t feel blessed.

So what good are the beatitudes?
Well according to Greek scholars the word ‘blessed’ can mean ‘happy’ but actually it is a state of being, that God is for those who suffer and they will be blessed.

When Jesus first preached in the synagogue after being tested in the wilderness He reached back to a four-hundred-year-old prophecy to announce His mission . He quotes from Isaiah 61:“The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners.”

And that is what the Beatitudes mean, that binding of the broken-hearted, the release from darkness.

One of my favourite quotes from the whole of the bible is

“He will wipe every tear from their eyes, there will be no more death, or mourning, or crying, or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

Let’s be really honest – the world doesn’t value the meek, the suffering, those suffering from injustice – but God does.
If these are God’s priorities they must be ours.
Theresa of Avila said “Christ has no body now, but yours. No hands, no feet on earth, but yours. Yours are the eyes through which Christ looks compassion into the world. Yours are the feet with which Christ walks to do good. Yours are the hands with which Christ blesses the world.”

So if we really want to be like Jesus we have to value the ones He values.
If there are people around us who don’t know God and don’t know His promises and His comfort – it is up to us. Those people will stay living in the darkness unless we show them God’s light. And we can only do that if we actively reach out to them, as individuals and as a church.
If we are going to be like Jesus we have to value those people.

So how might that look in our world today?

As I write this our government are embroiled in yet another scandal – A senior politician has explained his fine for not paying tax was due to ‘carelessness’ – how can you be careless with 27m? Would you or I be careless with 27 thousand or 27 hundred? Indeed there are people to whom £27 would mean being able to feed their families for several days.

This same government is saying there isn’t enough money to pay NHS workers.
One MP suggested NHS workers having to use food banks was due to bad budgeting – completely disregarding the fact that fuel and food prices have risen dramatically, mortgage rates have gone up, the cost of living has increased year on year, but wages haven’t. I know many NHS workers and if they are using food banks it will be because they are desperate and they will feel enormous shame.

It was the meek and the humble who worked on the front lines during the pandemic, while the rich and powerful were behind closed doors – some of them having parties – while the postmen, supermarket workers, policemen, firefighters, teachers and NHS workers were ensuring society didn’t collapse, risking their health – indeed a significant number of them died of Covid.

*These*are the people whom God is for, whom He will bless, so therefore we must also.

One of the things we can do is make sure that our elected officials can not only balance budgets and improve the economy, but actually have a care and concern for those lowest in society.

Who we vote for is OUR responsibility, and when those people are elected, it is up to us to hold them accountable.

And as we go about our lives, with our griefs and sorrows, let us take comfort from the fact that God is for us, He will bless us and we are never alone. 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 Tony**

God of the prophets, God of Christ:
we are reminded today that your blessings do not necessarily follow the logic of the world.

The world believes that the rich are blessed, but Jesus reminds us that it is the poor who are blessed, the poor in spirit and the materially poor as well.
We pray for a more just world in which all have enough and none are left behind.

Though we fear death and avoid its inevitable arrival,

Jesus tells us that those who mourn are blessed.
Help us to experience the truth of this mystery;

bring healing and wholeness to those who are sick;
and comfort those of us who have lost loved ones.

While people covet power, Jesus blesses the meek;
instruct us, O God, in the ways of humility;
help us to stand in solidarity with the oppressed and marginalized;
show us your presence in the faces of those the world forgets.

Give us a hunger and thirst for righteousness;

fill our hearts with love, overflowing with mercy;
make our hearts pure, and give us a vision of your glory.

In a society divided by so many labels we alone have created, remind us that we are created in your image, each of us a reflection of you, each of us your beloved child.
Help us then to end our conflicts and wars, help us to be peacemakers and agents of reconciliation.

Gracious God, you have so richly blessed us with life, with love and joy,

with hope in the midst of despair.
Help us to be the salt of the earth.
Help us to be the light of the world, sharing with others that which we have received,

boldly proclaiming the good news of your love, finding the seeds of your kingdom within us

and letting your way grow in our lives and throughout the world.
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**