

13 February 2022

*Christ Church New Southgate
& Friern Barnet*

Welcome

Song: Tell out, my soul

Prayer

Song: This is amazing grace

Coins prayer

Flip a coin to thank God for his gifts to us (heads) and to pray for someone that needs help (tails).

Song: My Lighthouse, my lighthouse

Reading Luke 6.17-26

¹⁷ He went down with them and stood on a level place. A large crowd of his disciples was there and a great number of people from all over Judea, from Jerusalem, and from the coastal region around Tyre and Sidon,¹⁸ who had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. Those troubled by impure spirits were cured,¹⁹ and the people all tried to touch him, because power was coming from him and healing them all.

²⁰ Looking at his disciples, he said:

“Blessed are you who are poor,
for yours is the kingdom of God.

²¹ Blessed are you who hunger now,
for you will be satisfied.

Blessed are you who weep now,
for you will laugh.

²² Blessed are you when people hate you,
when they exclude you and insult you
and reject your name as evil,
because of the Son of Man.

²³ “Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their ancestors treated the prophets.

²⁴ “But woe to you who are rich,
for you have already received your comfort.

²⁵ Woe to you who are well fed now,
for you will go hungry.

Woe to you who laugh now,
for you will mourn and weep.

²⁶ Woe to you when everyone speaks well of you,

for that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets.

Prayer

From all pettiness and smallness of mind,

All Good Lord, deliver us.

From every unkind remark and thoughtless word,

All Good Lord, deliver us.

From shuttered eyes and hardened hearts,

All Good Lord, deliver us.

Through the glorious diversity of creation,

All Lord, lead us to joy.

Through the rich diversity of humanity,

All Lord, lead us to understanding.

Through our desire to follow your Son

All Lord, lead us to peace and love.

May the love of your Son so influence our relationships, and direct all our actions, that any evil that separates us from one another may lose all power and significance and be overcome by our oneness in you, O God.

All Amen.

Sermon: Seeking the kingdom

Who is key in our society? Which are the most important people? The money men? The influencers? The bureaucrats? The ones with the biggest houses and dripping with gold? Who is key in our society? On whom does the success of our society rest? One benefit of the pandemic is that we acknowledged for the first time in generations that the most important people are the unseen or ignored ones. Supermarket workers, lorry drivers, carers for the elderly. These are the key workers, when these people can't work everything breaks down and we turn into monsters hunting for food and lo roll. Just for one tiny moment in time, we saw a kingdom flip in our society. Blessed are you lorry drivers, for you will be valued. Blessed are you who pick fruit, for you will be impossible to replace. Blessed are you supermarket workers, for you provide for all.

As Jesus says – in his most famous sermon – blessed are the poor, he does not mean it is good to be poor. He does not mean we should make poverty a virtue, he says it to shock the crowds swarming round him. He says it to underline that God does not have the same values as society. Back then if you were rich, powerful, happy and had a belly full of food – you would say God is blessing me. Jesus says no. Jesus says no you are not blessed. Jesus says you are powerful in your own eyes, not in God's. Jesus says there is a new way, a kingdom way. In his way the poor are poor no longer, the hungry are no longer hungry, the rejected are no longer rejected. For God looks upon our humble state and calls us blessed, for God scatters the proud, brings down rulers and send the rich away empty. He blesses Mary with bearing the very babe Christ Jesus, and so transforms what it truly means to be powerful. To each of us he calls to look at the world in a different way, to see with his eyes, to look for his kingdom and not our own.



Image: Felix Russell-Saw

Take a look at this image from Bristol. It is of 19 year old West African Manoel Akure praying ontop of a statue plinth. The statue was of Edward Colston which was knocked over and thrown in the river last year. Colston made his fortune from the slave trade through the Royal Africa Company. He used this money to support to almshouses, hospitals, schools, workhouses and churches throughout England.

In Jesus' day it was the social norm to let the poor stay poor, the hungry stay hungry and not to upset the apple cart over justice. Jesus calls time. Jesus challenges us to reconsider social norms to be pervasive and presumed and rooted in God's will. Jesus challenges the way things are done round here.

Today on racial justice Sunday we say again, that those who have been oppressed will be lifted up, those who have wept will laugh again. And we do not reserve the right of happiness for heaven, no we live by these beatitudes, they are our attitude – we actively seek that those who are oppressed be lifted up. We actively draw alongside those who weep and find a way together that they may laugh again and find joy. This is hope. This is divine hope, this is the hope that Jesus called his disciples to, his followers to, the crowd to

and calls each of us to. It is that same hope that conquers death and brings the resurrection of Christ. We who follow Christ are called to live differently, think differently and act differently. It will be our greatest blessing to see change that topples statues of prejudice and oppression and draws us closer to God. Blessed are the oppressed, you will be powerful. Woe to us who want to be king or queen instead. Which kingdom will we seek?

Video : Blessed are the agnostics.

Nadia Bolz-Webber

<https://thecorners.substack.com/p/blessed-are-the-agnostics>

Reflect

Write a blessing and woe of your own. Ask God to show you changes that you can make in your life to glorify the Kingdom of God.

Intercession led by Francis Brien

Song: Let us build a house

Blessing