

Blessed, just as we are

Caroline Fletcher *reflects on* Matthew 5:1-12

People may feel blessed because they have a great job, a lovely home, a wonderful family. They may talk about how blessed they feel after taking the holiday of a lifetime, or simply because they have a warm bed and a roof over their heads.

Jesus' view on who is blessed differs radically and is pretty shocking. Christ's Beatitudes are hard to understand, yet they are worth struggling with, for at their heart lie hope, grace and joy. There are a number of words in the original Greek that are difficult to adequately translate into English. *Makarioi*, which the NRSV Bible translates as "blessed", is one. It describes incredible joy. In the light of this, some of the Beatitudes seem very strange indeed. How can people who are persecuted and reviled have deep joy? How can Christ tell them to "rejoice and be glad"?

The answer to these paradoxes lies in the type of kingdom Jesus was bringing in. His message was one of incredible grace. His kingdom is open to those whom the world shuns. The message of the Beatitudes is not one that equates blessing with human effort, as is sometimes assumed. Jesus is not teaching that blessing comes by trying to be meeker or purer in heart. In fact, the Beatitudes declare how things are, rather than how they could be if we try harder. They simply announce how joyful we can be because Christ's kingdom has broken in, bringing hope to those desperate for God's help. 🙏

A brief history of Anglican liturgy

by Heather Smith

In a four-part series, Heather Smith examines the history of Anglican liturgy

The Church of England's website describes liturgy as "one of the glories of the Church of England". Lifelong Church of England goers may never have given the fact of liturgy much thought, but a

visit to another denomination will illustrate how central it is to Anglican experience.

The Church of England uses particular forms of words, with a set order to the service. The form itself is familiar and, while most of the words are the same for every service of a particular type, some elements change by week or season, for example the collect and readings. These are known as the "proprs". So the weekly worship journey is familiar, but not identical. It allows these well-known texts to interact with our experiences. Something said every week may suddenly strike us in a new way, or a reading or prayer may shed new light on what we have heard and said over years of churchgoing. 🙏



We give you thanks, Lord, for the blessings you pour out upon us. Give us wisdom to recognise when we are blessed, open hearts to receive these blessings, gratitude to rejoice in them and generosity to pass them on to others. This we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

The end of the year - part I

by Ricarda Witcombe

November is the last month of the church year. There are three more Sundays after today and then we begin a new season and a whole new year. What can we do to end this one well? Today, All Saints' Sunday, gives us some help as we are

reminded who we are and who we belong to. We don't need to worry about the journey we are on: ultimately we are travelling home and we travel together with all those saints, before us and beside us, who are pleased to call God their Father.

Augustine of Hippo, one of those saints, said, "Trust the past to God's mercy, the present to God's love and the future to God's providence." As we live out the last four weeks of this year, let us trust in God's safe holding of us all and look for signs of God's love in our lives. 🙏

"In the dark night of the soul bright flows the river of God."

John of the Cross (1542-1591), Carmelite friar and priest