Worship liturgy for Sun 1st November 2022

Call to Worship: As we gather to worship on All Saints Day, light a candle and/or look at your favourite image and give thanks for people who have encouraged you.

H&P 504 (not in STF) O Heavenly King look, down from above

Opening prayers

A prayer of adoration

Loving Heavenly Father, we gather to praise and worship you. We praise You for the autumn colours, especially the changing leaves on the trees, and the harvest that reminds us You created and sustain our world. We praise You for our Saviour Jesus, who died in our place, rose again and ascended into heaven to sit at you right hand. We join in worship on All Saints Day giving thanks for people who have encouraged us in our daily discipleship (name those people you thought about in the call to worship).

We celebrate Your provision for us and Your faithfulness to us. We praise You for the joy and purpose we find as we follow You. We praise You for the gift of Your Holy Spirit, fill us anew and open our ears to hear what You want to say to us through this passage in Matthew. Bless our time of worship, that we may know more of Your love for us and see more of Your grace at work in our live and world.

A prayer of confession

Lord, forgive us when we go our own way and do our own thing because we don't listen to You. *Lord graciously forgive us.* Lord forgive us when we forget to read Your word and spend time in your presence. *Lord graciously forgive us.* Lord, forgive us when we act from our own selfish motives*. Lord graciously forgive us.* Lord, forgive us when we fail to show forgiveness and compassion to others. *Lord graciously forgive us.*

Give us a renewed sense of your presence as we worship and open our ears to hear your message. We ask these prayers in and through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.

Matthew 5 v 1 – 12 (read passage in different translation to the one you normally use)

STF 254 Seek ye first the kingdom of God

Jesus' manifesto - our attitudes to God and others

We begin with a story - A criminal with a long record of transgressions was on trial. The jury found him guilty on 33 counts and the judge sentenced him to 189 years. Realizing that even with time off for good behaviour he would be over a hundred when he was released, the prisoner burst into tears. Noting this display of remorse, the judge reconsidered. He said, "I didn't mean to be so

severe. Thinking it over, I can see that I've imposed an extremely harsh sentence. So you don't have to serve the whole time." The prisoner beamed with newfound hope until the judge leaned forward and said, "Just do as much as you can."

At the beginning of His public ministry, Jesus sets out his "manifesto." Does anyone remember - WWJD – What would Jesus do? This passage from Matthew helps us to know what Jesus would do. We see that 1) He looks at our attitude to God and 2) our attitude to others. The values and standards of Jesus are in direct conflict with those of the world. As we look at Jesus' manifesto for his public ministry, we see that He calls us to be different or counter cultural.

1) Jesus looks at our attitude to God

There are four key characteristics that Jesus commends as being blessed or happy depending on the bible translation. The Greek word, translated as blessed or happy, is **"***makarios."* The meaning here is not happy because this is subjective and depends on circumstances. The meaning conveys how God thinks about us as Christians and this is what accounts for the fact that we are blessed. The first characteristic is "*poor in spirit"* (v3). We recognise our need for God and acknowledge that we need Him. We consider ourselves to be spiritually poor because we depend on God for everything. The second characteristic is **"***mourn" (v4), which* means repentance or genuine sorrow that leads to repentance. Jesus is speaking about receiving the free forgiveness of God when we repent. The third characteristic is "meek" (v5). The Greek word is "*praus*", which speaks about self-control and having a humble and gentle attitude towards others. Another way of thinking about this is being sensitive and patient in your dealings with others; while having a realistic view of yourself. The term *"Spiritual inheritance" or "inherit the earth*" reminds us that we have nothing in this world, but we have everything in Jesus' promise of eternal life. The fourth characteristic is *"hunger and thirst for righteousness"* (v6), which means to hunger for spiritual things or righteousness. There are 2 aspects to this righteousness. The first is personal righteousness or justification which speaks about having a right relationship with God. The second is social righteousness which speaks about liberation from oppression and seeking justice for others or having integrity when dealing with others. As followers of Jesus, we realise we need God (v3) and we show repentance (v4), self-control (v5) and spiritual hunger for the things of God (v6).

2) Jesus looks our attitude to others

Let's start with another storey - *A church had fallen upon hard times and only a few members were left. In the mountains near the church there lived a retired bishop. It occurred to the minister to ask the bishop how to save the church. They spoke at length, but the bishop simply said "I have no advice to give. The only thing I can tell you is that Jesus is one of you." The pastor, returning to the*

church, told the church members what the bishop had said. In the months that followed, they pondered the words of the bishop. "Jesus is one of us" As they thought about this, they began to treat each other with compassion and love.

As time went by, people visiting the church noticed the aura of respect and gentle kindness that surrounded the small church. Hardly knowing why, more people began to come back to the church. They began to bring their friends, and their friends brought more friends. Within a few years, the small church had once again become a thriving church.

Jesus commends four more characteristics as being blessed when we consider our attitude to others. The fifth characteristic is a noun in Greek "eleos" (v7) which is translated as being merciful and showing compassion for people. We recognise that God's character is to always show mercy. We cannot receive His mercy and forgiveness without first saying sorry (repent) and we cannot claim to have said sorry if we are not merciful to others. The sixth characteristic is "pure in heart" (v8) which reminds us to be sincere and open in our relationships with others. Here we see the contrast between inner thoughts and outward actions. The seventh characteristic is being a "peacemaker" (v9); someone who actively pursues peace and reconciliation. We remember intrigue and deception cause conflict; whereas openness and sincerity lead to reconciliation. Jesus is clear that conflict is the inevitable result of His coming, but we should not seek conflict or be responsible for it. The eighth characteristic is "*persecuted because of righteousness*" (v10) which remind us we may face persecution, but we will not retaliate, sulk, or wallow in self-pity. Jesus ends by reminding us that we are blessed when we are despised, rejected, slandered, and persecuted because of Him. He calls us to rejoice and be glad" because we will receive our reward in heaven. As followers of Jesus, we are merciful, showing compassion (v7) and we are open in our relationships (v8). We seek peace(v9) and we recognise that we may face persecution (v10). As we draw our thoughts to a close, we reflect that what we do in private shapes how we behave in public. It is God's Holy Spirit working in and through us that helps us to have the right attitude to God and others.

STF 255 The kingdom of God is justice and joy

Prayers for Others

We pray for peace and an end to violence and loss of life, remembering everywhere in our world affected by conflict and war. We pray that the hearts of all in Government in those countries will be changed and they will do all they can to seek peace. We give thanks that You will bring peace to those situations of conflict; we may not know how this will happen, but we know that You are a

God of Peace. We pray particularly for churches worshipping amidst war and we give thanks for their acts of love and service as they faithfully follow You.

We pray for everyone affected by severe weather and storms that have happened this week. We pray for medical staff treating the injured. We remember everyone whose homes and possessions have been damaged. Comfort and encourage them as they begin to rebuild and repair. We pray for all the emergency workers who are working very hard to restore essential services and keep people safe.

We pray for everyone facing financial hardship as bills increase and winter approaches. We pray particularly for people who are unsure how they will pay their bills and heat their homes. We remember those who are isolated and on their own. We give thanks for Age UK, homeless charities, food banks and Christians against Poverty who work hard to alleviate loneliness, financial suffering and serve the homeless.

We pray for our community and our churches, for those who are unwell, for those who are living with life limiting conditions and for those who are grieving. Help all who struggle with ill health (name anyone specific). Be close to all those who are grieving (name anyone specific). May they know that You are with them and may they experience a renewed sense of Your presence and comfort.

We pray for ourselves as followers of Jesus, continue Your work of transforming our attitude to God and others. Help us to become more Christ-like, allowing your Holy Spirit to work in and through us transforming our attitude to God and others.

We bring all of our prayers for others to a close as we join in saying the Lord's Prayer - 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 this day 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, for ever and ever. Amen

STF 566 Take my life and let it be

Blessing - Christ before, and Christ beside us. God all around us and the Spirit at work in our attitude to God and others. Change our attitude to God and others. Help us to find new ways to show God's love, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen