

**Readings:** CtW Deuteronomy 10: 12, Isaiah 40: 28 – 31, Psalm 147;  
Micah 6: 6 – 8; 1 Corinthians 1: 26 – 30; Matthew 5: 1 – 12

Before reflection: **sing** *Count Your Blessings*

**Reflection: WALKING HUMBLY WITH YOUR GOD**

- *Beatitudes and Blessings*
- *human, foolish, chosen people – alleluia!*
- *Walk in God's ways. Love and serve the Lord.*
- *what does 'walking humbly with God' mean to you?*

If we take time to count our blessings, we may truly be surprised by how many there are. However challenging life becomes, there are always blessings – if we open our eyes, hearts and minds to see them. It is a matter of attitude – how we choose to see things. The collection of blessing sayings at the beginning of Matthew chapter 5 is often known as the Beatitudes – we could twist the language a little and recognise that it is our attitude to life that determines whether we are aware of blessings or see what triggers them as challenges instead,

As we think about Waitangi Day, perhaps we can see the signing of the treaty as a blessing – because it enables all of us to be here and call New Zealand home – to be in partnership and all have equal rights. Yes there are differences of understanding and there have been many breaches of the intent and principles of the treaty since 1840 but it does provide some principles about partnership and protection and establishment of a government that would seek to maintain peace and order. It is a blessing, if we choose to see it that way.

When Jesus spoke to his disciples about blessings and being blessed, he was explaining about the Kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven, God's intention for human life. Yet if we examine what he said, we can see that he was making it clear that God's priorities and the way God wanted people to live, was rather different from the normal expectation of society.

*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* That was the opposite of what people might have expected. Those who had all the spiritual knowledge or claimed that they did, might be expected to inherit God's kingdom. Yet Jesus is saying 'when you are at the end of your rope, when you don't know where to turn, when you feel bereft of spiritual strength, that's when God takes over – because you are open to there being more of God and less of you. When you feel poor in spirit there is room for God to act – and you are part of God's kingdom.'

*Blessed are those who mourn for they will be comforted.* Was Jesus saying 'you are blessed when you've lost what is most dear to you, because in that time of deep mourning and loneliness you are open to the embrace of the God who loves you deeply.?'

*Blessed are the meek for they will inherit the earth.* Meek is a word that makes us think of someone who has lost their courage, who stays quietly in the background. Yet maybe Jesus was saying 'you're blessed when you're content with just who you are – no more, no less. That's the moment when you realise that you have access to all the things that cannot be bought – love, friendship, strength from God, abundant life.'"

*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.* Was Jesus saying 'you are blessed when you have worked up a good appetite for knowing more about God, deepening your relationship with God'?

*Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.* Mercy is not a common word in language today. What if we see it in different terms? Maybe Jesus was saying ‘you are blessed when you care. At the moment of being care-full for others, you find yourselves cared for.’

*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.* Was Jesus saying here? - ‘you are blessed when you get your inside world – your mind and heart – focused on the right track. Then you can see God in the world outside of you.’

*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God.* Jesus seems to be saying “you are blessed when you can show people how to co-operate instead of compete or fight. That’s when you discover who you really are, and your place in God’s family.’

*Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* Was Jesus saying? - ‘you are blessed when your commitment to God provokes persecution if the persecution drives you even deeper into God’s kingdom. And not only that – count yourselves blessed every time people put you down or throw you out or speak lies about you to discredit me. What it means is that the truth is too close for comfort and they are uncomfortable. You can be glad when that happens, for God’s prophets and witnesses have always been in that kind of trouble. It shows your faithfulness to God. Rejoice.

An upside down world is what Jesus was talking about – where there are different values from the norm. That’s what we see in the Corinthians reading for today too where what seems nonsense in the eyes of the world is what God can transform. The wise and the powerful lose their wisdom and power in comparison with the wisdom of God. *God has brought you into union with Christ Jesus, and God has made Christ to be our wisdom. We become God’s holy people.*

You may recall that was Paul’s theme a few verses earlier, as we thought about last week, we are called to become God’s holy people – and God will bless you for living God’s way. We are human, foolish, chosen people, as we sang earlier. Yet God chooses us and works through us so that all creation might learn to praise God. Alleluia. That means praise God. I love Shirley Murray’s words about us being the echo of God’s laughter, the image of God’s smile, the proof of God’s good humour. We are loved, though so absurd. God’s wisdom can turn our absurdity into a powerful force for good in the world, a powerful force for God.

And what about what the prophet Micah tells us? What does God expect of us – to do justice, in other words to do what is right and fair for everyone. - to love kindness – in other words to live kindly and with compassion. - and to walk humbly with your God. I wonder what that means for you?

To walk humbly has the notion of not being proud of our own abilities but trusting God to work through us. Walking humbly also has the notion of humility – recognising that we need God’s strength and wisdom so we can be part of God’s mission in the world. Walking humbly is also about walking with God every moment of every day – loving and serving the Lord in all that we do and say.

May I challenge you this week to earnestly walk in God’s ways, to seek God’s strength and wisdom in every thing you do. Walk humbly with God and you will receive God’s blessing. Amen

Matawhero: prayers

St Andrew’s: another of Shirley Murray’s hymns is like a prayer, inviting God to teach us what we need to know to walk humbly with God. Let’s sing *Come teach us, Spirit of our God.*