

Matthew 5:1-12
MP 2.11.14 All Saints' Day

I thought you might be interested in this job advert:

(Reading from 'Jobs' section of newspaper)

A glorious opportunity is available for a candidate with the following attributes:

*Poor in spirit,
a mourner,
humble,
always seeking to do God's will,
merciful,
pure in heart,
a peacemaker*

Salary/rewards:

*Membership of God's Kingdom,
comfort,
satisfaction,
mercy,
seeing God,
being a child of God,
persecution.*

Length of contract:

eternal! (amazing long term prospects)

Not your average job description!

Looking at some of the requirements in the actual job adverts in the newspaper I read: ambitious, high achiever, self-motivated, enthusiastic, driven, naturally confident, able to work independently.

But here we see quite the opposite. The standards we're used to seeing are turned upside down.

The job description is very different for those 'saints' living as part of God's Kingdom

Dependence on God

When we look at some of these characteristics, they are very much about admitting our dependence on God.

Isn't it great that God will *bless* us because of our dependence on him!

If we admit that we are 'poor in spirit' we acknowledge that we have no spiritual resources of our own to bring to God. We wholly trust in him. Somebody described it as 'standing before God with empty hands, holding them open to him'. (*St Therese of Lisieux*)
Less of me, more of God.

This is the opposite of the self-assertion and independence which is so often encouraged in the world in general - it doesn't look good to admit we can't manage on our own. It's not always easy to ask for help or even to accept help when it's offered.

But isn't it great that *God* will bless us because of our dependence on him!

I think sometimes we only come to realise just how much we need to depend on God when other things we have counted on are taken away – we lose our job, someone close to us dies, perhaps we are not able physically to do what we used to. Resting in God, being aware of his presence with us and knowing that he has a purpose for us can bring great blessing, even in difficult times. 'In Christ *alone* my hope is found' – that hymn certainly helped me to focus on what was really important when I found someone I relied on taken away.

Thinking about it like this perhaps helps us to appreciate how people who are actually materially poor could possibly feel 'blessed by God' as they look to him in the absence of all other comforts.

Someone who mourns, in this context, isn't necessarily bereaved. It could be someone who is grieving over sin and evil, like the Psalmist who said to God 'Streams of tears flow from my eyes because your law is not obeyed' (Psalm 119:136)

If we realise the need to change, mourning can bring healing and teaches us to hope and love. We can think of Peter, after he had denied knowing Jesus, grieving, but then repenting and coming back to Jesus – and he went on to become the leader of the church!

This is the opposite to the kind of mourning which causes people to lose hope, like Judas and others today, who grieve over their actions then tragically give up on life completely.

Being humble (or meek in some translations) is also about depending on God. We tend to think of meekness as being feeble, but here it is a strength not a weakness. It means not aggressively insisting on our own rights or pushing ourselves forward, but relying on God to get us to where he wants us.

How often are we encouraged to promote ourselves in an attempt to grasp everything life can offer?

But isn't it great that God will bless us because of our *dependence* on him!

Seeking to do God's will means being different, not giving in to popular opinion as we search for true justice and good. We are open to God's way, ready for something greater, ready to do things we could never have imagined ourselves doing!

As we consider the remaining characteristics, (being merciful, pure in heart, a peacemaker) we see that they are the outworking of our dependence on God, the result of the presence of his spirit within us - our response to his love.

Rewards

What I have described as the salary or rewards in the job description are the wonderful blessings that flow from God even though we may not always feel blessed. It can be quite hard to imagine what 'blessed' means. The GNB translates it as 'happy' but there's more to it than what we usually mean by happy. Maybe we can think of being blessed as the ultimate wellbeing of those who share in the salvation of God's Kingdom. If God is king in our lives, if we live under his rule and protection dependent on him, our character will be as Jesus describes, we will fit the 'job description' and belong to his Kingdom. Now, in an incomplete way, in eternity, for real!

And there's also a promise of seeing God – of course, this will only happen completely when we see God face to face in eternity. But we can begin to see him as we live our lives with the 'mind of Christ', seeking to become more and more like him. We can be deeply aware of his presence with us and be open to perceiving his will for us. Resting in his presence can be a real comfort when things aren't working out as we would want or expect. At times it might seem as if God isn't answering our prayers (well, not in the way we would want) but knowing that he is with us can help us to feel secure in his way of doing things.

We are warned that a 'reward' of living as a saint can be persecution. The world hates this upside down, back to front behaviour, it wants us to conform to the crowd around us. If we dare to be different, we attract opposition. For us this is most

likely to take the form of ridicule, cruel words but in some cases it is far worse - we hear of those Christians in Iraq being chased out of their homes and villages, even killed if they don't conform. But even in this persecution we can be blessed and know that we are sharing with the saints who went before us and, of course, with Jesus himself.

In the face of persecution, isn't it great that God will bless us if we depend on him!

As we consider Jesus' life on earth, we see these saintly attributes carried out perfectly, as he lived in love and humility. Our job, with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us, is to conform our lives to Christ, become more like Him. The more we become like Him in this life, the more we will experience his Kingdom here on earth now, as well as looking ahead to a glorious future.

So we are all called to be saints!

Called to be different to others in the world around us, dependent on God. Called to receive the distinctive spiritual joy of those who share in God's Kingdom.

Isn't it great that God will bless us because of our dependence on him!

Jesus wants us all to be saved and live with Him for all eternity. Sainthood is not reserved just for the chosen few, but it is the call for all of us.

Chris Nowak 2.11.14