Sermon: “**Happy are those who…**” (Matthew 5.3-9)

I have a long list of those in the parish who have died in the nearly nine years I have been here. This could be a source of sadness, but should also be a source of joy. Imagine how big our pastoral book would be if all those who have died and whose address is now ‘heaven’ were in it! These are the saints of Lindisfarne, as well as all the others who died before that.

Today is All Saints Day. Saints really are *all* those who trust in God, not just especially holy ones.

I have made a first draft of a Touchstone article due 19 Feb 2021. The Lectionary readings for March compare and contrast Jesus with Moses. Today we have another, which comes from the start of the so-called Sermon on the Mount, the Beatitudes. Moses gave the Law on Mount Sinai, Jesus gives a new ‘law’ on a different mount.

The word blessing (Hb *ashar)* is best translated “you are on the right road.” In other words, Jesus says, “You are on the right road when you are in poor in spirit… when you mourn…when you are meek…etc.”

We live in a world which often has very different values. For most people today it’s not “right” in this world to be poor; it’s not considered “good” to be weak or vulnerable. The message everywhere is that success is measured by wealth, power, and privilege.

Yet God speaks clearly about what the “right” road is, which is often in marked contrast. On the right road to what? Not just the Kingdom of God, but that place where we are internally at peace. God invites us to realise that in our poverty we can find great wealth; in our weakness, we can find surprising strength; and that in our lost-ness, we are found by God.

We struggle to accept these truths, but we are here to be forgiven, healed, and guided again on right paths.

One reason we celebrate the saints is to recall how they at times were able to find that “right road” and so inspire us to do the same. It is easier to take this from ordinary Christians than the super saints and that is all the more reason to remember those on my long list.