

# Parish service, St Peter - Beatitudes 5

## 01/07/18 09:30

We come to our 5th sermon in a series on the Beatitudes - the sayings of Jesus where he names God's blessings (filling with joy) on different sections of society. Today we hear "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled".

On this St Peter's day - mindful that St Peter was perhaps Jesus' closest disciple, and the one on whom he pledged to build his Church - I wanted us to look to Peter and see how God's church is being built here in Caversham in this early 21st Century. So, hopefully this will be a dialogue today!

For the last 3 years, we have been participating in Partnership for Missional Church. A process which encourages us to develop skills of noticing God at work in our world, and discover new confidence to be part of God's plans for this part of his creation. There has been a wonderful group leading our PMC process, headed by Catherine Radcliffe. They have led us in numerous exercises and invited us to think about so many different aspects of our mission. Now the taught part of PMC has come to an end. The danger ahead is that we conclude in our heads that PMC is over, and we can return to normality. But I think a great deal has changed in this parish over these last few years. For some of us, there is a new outlook, with new skills being developed. But I wonder what you think?

I have put in the beginning of the order of service booklet three questions for us to discuss together this morning. So I am going to invite you to turn to your neighbour, or to move and find someone you want to talk to. We are going to have 10 minutes to discuss these 3 questions:

1. What changes have we noticed over the last 3 years?
2. Over this time, what signs are there that we are more confident in our faith and aware that God is at work in us?
3. What one thing could we do next that God is calling us to, as we become a Christ-like community?

After that, we will have a chance to hear from one another.

[discussion & feedback]

Noticing our community around us, and those who are working for its good, has been of the key skills we have developed during PMC. For we believe that in noticing our community, we can spot where God is building his Kingdom. As people work to support one another; as injustices are proclaimed and tackled; as people strive to bring peace to others lives. Throughout its history, the Church of God has had phases when it more acutely responded to the needs of society. Acting as a driver and catalyst for change; challenging injustice. Think of the campaign against slavery and William Wilberforce. Or churches in this country that stood against Apartheid in South Africa. God calls his followers to be people who are hungry and thirsty for change and for justice.

So what is God calling his people in Caversham to? How might we be the ones who promote justice, and to work together with anyone who is seeking that end? This is one dimension to what we mean to Become a Christ-like Community - people who seek to bring good news to the poor, proclaim release to the captives, to ensure the oppressed go free, the blind see (to quote the bible).

When we pray the Lord's prayer today, and every day, to ask God that his Kingdom might come here on earth, as it is in Heaven. So we need to ask, what we are doing to build that Kingdom here? Being hungry and thirsty for that Kingdom, and ready to face the challenges of our own community at this time, is key to this. For to be Kingdom builders is to be hungry and thirsty for righteousness.

And we are called to be persistent in that righteousness. Luke's Gospel reading reminds us that God responds to those who cry to him day and night for justice.

Our task is to believe that God is working for his Kingdom right here and now in Caversham. And not to be people who are passive in this Kingdom building. But might we be a parish that is always active - looking for signs of God, wanting through our actions to discover God, and wanting to tell of the Good News of God's Kingdom to those who haven't heard it. Might we build our community, this community of Caversham, to become Christ-like - obsessed with the Kingdom of God? So we need to continue those PMC skills of naming where we see God to one another. To attend to scripture and what God might be saying to us through it. To look at our hospitality and how, through this, we are meeting God.

Blessed are those who are hungry and thirsty for God's righteousness, says Jesus. May that be us as we go forward together, renewed and refreshed by the work of PMC.