

Lectionary passages:-

Psalm 34 v1-10

I John 3 v1-3;

Matthew 5 v1-12

We are moving rapidly towards the end of the Christian year... 22nd November is the last Sunday before Advent, the new Christian year on 29th November!

Psalm 34 is a Psalm of Praise and thanks God for all his goodness and faithfulness to us. It is good to Praise the Lord and give thanks, it encourages spiritual health!

While the Matthew passage is the familiar list of Beatitudes: Blessed are the poor in Spirit etc.

So I thought a quick look at the unfamiliar I John 3 maybe useful!

1. God's love is considered by John, How great is his love... we often do need to pause and consider God's Love, there is no need for him to stoop down as it were and get involved in our messy world and messy lives, but he is a good Father and he loves us. He cannot help himself.
2. God lavishes his love, he does not hold back, he is good, he is very good to us - maybe now is the time to read Psalm 34 or a similar Psalm of Praise!
3. We are children of God. I occasionally go to the village of Radway, near Banbury, the place my grandfather grew up, the name "Strong" is even now remembered in the village even though grandad left there in 1908! I feel I have a connection there. As a child of God my connection is in heaven, so it is not my past or even what God has done in Christ Jesus to make me his child, it is the future that we look forward to, in heaven, as God's family.
4. But we belong to a different culture and world and our family name, God's family name, is not respected here on earth. God is not known by most and we and the church are not recognised for what it is, part of God's Kingdom, such ideas are foreign to our world thinking. God is not included in their future.
5. In verse 2 John reminds us that we are children. Our adult state in heaven is not yet known by us. When I look back at my childhood, it was good, but bears no comparison to my adult life. So it will be with us in heaven, we cannot determine our future "career" by looking at our present childhood days on earth!
6. John reminds us that one day Jesus will appear, yes before our eyes. John was there in Acts chapter one when the angels promised Jesus would return

in the same way he had ascended into heaven; maybe John is using this for his reasoning? We should be prepared for that day, next week the wise and foolish bridesmaids in Matthew 25 is our passage subject. As we approach the end of the Christian year we must consider the end of the story, the return of Jesus to this world. Before once again in Advent, we begin again in Bethlehem.

7. When Jesus appears we shall be like him, our lives will be fully perfected and we shall have an eternity in heaven with him to look forward to.
8. John encourages his readers, who like us had difficult times to face, to keep looking up. To remember our heavenly Father who loves us. To be ready for the next step in our eternal life. John had been with Jesus at the start and 60 years later when all the other disciples had been killed and the church persecuted and hated, John is 100% confident in Jesus and his promises of a blessed future for all God's children. May that faith and hope be ours too!