



SUNDAY 01 FEBRUARY 2026

DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

**The Parishes of:** Bishop Auckland || Newton Aycliffe & Shildon || Willington  
Tow Law & Wolsingham || Tudhoe || Coundon, Ferryhill & Windlestone

## ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

### 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the Year (A) - Matthew 5: 1-12

Remember the old story of the primary school art class where the teacher asked the children to choose whatever they wanted to draw. When she went round to see what the young artists were doing, one earnest lad was working away seriously at something she didn't recognise. He said he was drawing a picture of God. 'But no one knows what God looks like', she said. 'They will when I've finished this!' was the reply.

Today's Gospel is the famous passage from Matthew of the eight Beatitudes. Many have said it's the best portrait of Jesus that we have. In the Lord's Prayer we pray, 'Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven'. The Kingdom will be revealed in its fulness in heaven, but the Kingdom has already begun here. The seeds and signposts of God's presence are with us here and now. They show in the difficult qualities and features of these Beatitudes. St Matthew has chosen to begin his Sermon on the Mount with these penetrating statements of Jesus.

The Lord was speaking to ordinary people caught up in an unjust system. He interpreted their struggles in a new and encouraging way, looking beyond the surface of events to say that God is present and active in the current experience of people through the listed ways he describes here. No need to go further to find God who is with us right now. Jesus calls the people of the Beatitudes 'blessed' – a word that confirms that these qualities, activities and dispositions are telltale signs of the Father's will being done here on earth. The Beatitudes are a popular piece of writing, but they point to hard and sustained work. Carrying crosses, they're part of a true disciple's job description.

We may well feel out of touch with our blessedness, or being poor in spirit, we might find consistent trust in God hard to achieve. But the beatitudes tend not to be isolated or solitary attitudes – we may find several of them riding together and evident in the living mindset of the same person. They often overlap and walk hand in hand.

Belief in God's mercy may challenge us to be merciful. The Jesus who describes himself as gentle and humble in heart can feed our efforts to be gentle. Over time, being pure in heart may be a growing habit of seeing God in all things and, on a good day, in all people. It may require helping or working to restore relationships, to reconcile or be reconciled, learning to make peace rather than division. The cost of working for the common good, for justice, can be extreme when others live by what they can get away with, and who may well oppose, lie, and discredit attempts of ours that threaten their lifestyle. The blessed person will rightly mourn heartfelt loss and, maybe increasingly as years go by, carry a sorrow for any sin and failure they recognise as theirs.

The Beatitudes, this portrait of the God who joined us in our humanity, is the manifesto of today's disciple – seeking from the Lord the grit and perseverance to see as he sees, and to demonstrate a working reverence for what is right and what honours the dignity of everyone. Think carefully whenever you say, 'God bless you'. And go gently.



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### Pope Francis on discernment

*An essential condition for progress in discernment is a growing understanding of God's patience and his timetable, which are never our own. God does not pour down fire upon those who are faithful (Luke 9:54), or allow the zealous to uproot the tares growing among the wheat (Mt 13:29). Generosity too is demanded, for it is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35).*

*Discernment is not about discovering what more we can get out of this life, but about recognising how we can better accomplish the mission entrusted to us at our baptism. This entails a readiness to make sacrifices, even to sacrificing everything. For happiness is a paradox. We experience it most when we accept the mysterious logic that is not of this world: "This is our logic", says Saint Bonaventure, pointing to the cross. Once we enter into this dynamic, we will not let our consciences be numbered and we will open ourselves generously to discernment.*

*Rejoice and Be Glad—para 174*