

Living Saints!

Revelation 7^{9-end}; Psalm 34¹⁻¹⁰; 1 John 3¹⁻³; Matthew 5¹⁻¹²

See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called the children of God; and that is what we are. (1 John 3¹)

Heaven is full of saints - they see God face to face **and worship him day and night; they hunger no more, and thirst no more...the Lamb at the centre of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of the water of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.**

That is the traditional understanding of saints, those who are dead and with God - and that is something that we anticipate enjoying one day, although most of are glad to delay that moment for as long as possible!

John, in the letter written many years before his Revelation, discourages speculation about what this life in heaven is like - **what we will be has not yet been revealed** (literally, *unveiled*, but the reality is that no-one has experienced this and so no-one can talk about it with any certainty!). What John does say is:

- ✠ In heaven we won't be saints, we will be so much more than a saint! **What we do know is this: when he is revealed we will be like him, for we will see him as he is.** We will be with Jesus, we will see Jesus, we will be like Jesus. It isn't going to be an effort and it isn't going to be a struggle - it will just be perfectly natural.
- ✠ For now we have the challenge to begin to live as if we were in heaven! **All who have this hope in him purify themselves just as he is pure.** How then do we manage that? Simply this - we are motivated by love. John began this chapter: **See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called the children of God; AND THAT IS WHAT WE ARE.** That is what makes us living saints - we take living as God's children seriously and we know for a certainty that God loves us enough to call us his children.

The only other thing we need to take note of today in that the word translated **Blessed** in the Gospel reading has a meaning that is much more specific than that. *Makarios* means, *to be congratulated or how fortunate!*

- ✠ The **poor in spirit** are those who humbly trust God. *This humble, 'unworldly' attitude, which puts its trust only in God is the mark of the disciple; the kingdom of heaven belongs to (perhaps better 'consists of') such people. They are God's people (France, in loc).*
- ✠ **Those who mourn** - this isn't just those who suffer bereavement, but all whose life is unhappy, especially those who suffer for their loyalty to God. In God they find a consolation that transcends their worldly situation - comfort is God's business.
- ✠ The **meek** are those who don't throw their weight about. Meekness is *controlled strength*. God gives to the meek an **inheritance** they would never seize for themselves.
- ✠ To **hunger and thirst for righteousness** isn't to become a political campaigner, but it is a personal ambition to become like God - such a relationship unclouded by disobedience is satisfying.
- ✠ **Mercy** isn't an emotional thing, it is a practical response to need. When we are merciful to others it becomes reciprocal.
- ✠ The **pure in heart** refers not to our morals but to our focus - to love God with an uncomplicated devotion and an undivided loyalty: we see the evidence of God daily when this is our aim.
- ✠ A **peacemaker** stands in sharp contrast with a world marked by conflict, rivalry and opinions. Peacemakers have allowed the distinctive DNA of being God's come to the fore in their character.
- ✠ Those who are **persecuted for righteousness** aren't victimised for being good. They are paying a price for the discomfort that a life wholly devoted to God causes to others - these are the people who are so saintly they would feel at home in heaven.

Saints have always made people uncomfortable! That is why we enjoy the caricatures of saints - the women who grew beards to protect their virginity; etc - because they are so remote that we don't feel we need to (or want to) become like them.