

Saint Mary's Newsletter: July

Vicar: David Smithson 027 4213200 Fridays

07 8492761 Afterhours

Lay Minister: Charles Clark 021 02691764

Peoples Warden: Sally-Ann Riddell 022 107562

Vicars Warden: John Heaton 021 702871



SERVICES FOR JULY



Sunday 6th:

10am Holy Communion Service

Refreshments: Melanie

Prayers: Melanie

Sunday 13th:

10am Holy Communion Service

Refreshments: Majella

Prayers: Majella

Sunday 20th:

10am Holy Communion Service

Refreshments: Trish

Prayers: Trish

Sunday 27th:

10am Holy Communion Service

Refreshments: Kay

Prayers: Kay

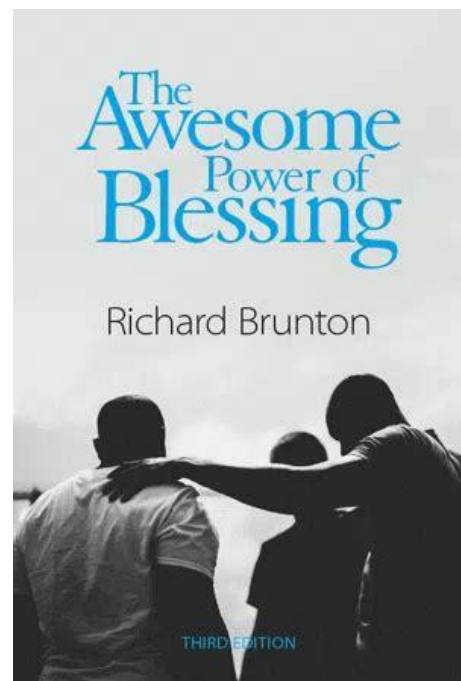


Parish Giving

If you are not already doing so, please consider giving to the parish via Automatic Payment. St Mary's has to pay for our vicar and all other costs of running a Parish, as well as giving a proportion to the Diocese. Please help us to be sustainable by giving via Automatic Payment. It is an easy way to give and is useful for the parish in running its budget. The Parish Bank Account is:

02 0410 0103053 00

Prayer/Study Group meets Weds 7pm
@ the church – looking at The Awesome
Power of Blessing



blessed

Quite possibly, the most frequently used word in the Christian's vocabulary is *blessed*. "Have a blessed day," "blessed to be a blessing," and "God bless you" are just a few of the ways we put it to use. It's even common among unbelievers to describe themselves as "blessed." Some people think of *blessed* as a spiritual term for "good fortune," like when we receive something good, the desired outcome, or an exceptional comfort. But what does it really mean to be blessed?

The Greek word often translated as "blessed" is *makarios*, which means "fortunate," "happy," "enlarged," or "lengthy." *Makarios* is used in the Septuagint (a translation of the Old Testament into the Greek language) and the New Testament to define the kind of happiness that comes from receiving favour from God. Consequently, the word can also be translated "favoured." In the New Testament, it usually carries the meaning of being "blessed by God." Mary, the mother of Jesus, was "blessed among women" (Luke 1:42–45, 48), it was the Lord God who had blessed and favoured her.

While material blessings are certainly included in God's favour, the Bible ascribes a much fuller meaning to the word *blessed*.

Perhaps the most well-known use of the word *blessed* in the Bible is found in the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3–12; Luke 6:20–23). Jesus used the term *blessed* in the framework of the Beatitudes to describe the inner quality of a faithful servant of God. This blessedness is a spiritual state of well-being and prosperity—a deep, joy-filled contentment that cannot be shaken by poverty, grief, famine, persecution, war, or any other trial or tragedy we face in life. In human terms, the situations depicted in the Beatitudes are far from blessings, but because God is present with us through these difficult times, we are actually blessed by Him in them.

The true servant of God is blessed, regardless of circumstances, because God has favoured him or her with a fully satisfied soul (Psalm 63:1–5; John 4:14). The material things we crave can never bring genuine happiness or contentment. True fulfilment can only be found in a relationship with God through His Son, Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1–2).

From the time God first created humans, He blessed them (Genesis 1:22; 5:2; 12:3) and has continued to do so throughout history (Genesis 26:3; Deuteronomy 7:13; Job 42:12; Judges 13:24). Because of Christ's work of redemption on the cross, we can now receive the full blessings of God through faith in Him: "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3). We are blessed because our sins are forgiven and can no longer be counted against us (Psalm 32:1–2).

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..../ CONTINUED : The Bible measures blessedness differently from how people of the world measure it: "Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him" (James 1:12). To those who rest in God, He grants an inner state of joy that is unaffected by external trials. What is this promised "crown of life?" It is the never-ending, victorious life in the world to come, where all trials will be ended. The marvellous blessings we experience now are minor compared to the benefits God has stored up for us in His eternal kingdom (1 Corinthians 2:9).

The one who is blessed trusts in God's love, no matter what: "Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? . . . No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us. And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:35–39, NLT).

Blessed speaks of our inner state of well-being, the prosperity of our souls in Christ. Blessedness comes from unhindered fellowship with God the Father through our Lord Jesus. To be blessed is to experience the full impact of God's presence in our lives now and for all eternity.

This Month in Christian History:

1549: Spanish Jesuit's, led by Francis Xavier, land in Kagoshima, becoming the first Christian missionaries to Japan. The next ninety years came to be known as "the Christian century of Japan". They assimilated their Christian art, dress and churches into the Japanese style. Many missionaries were martyred.

