

All Saints Shop window : Revelation 7 : 9 The Great Multitude in White Robes

Do you like shopping – I mean real shopping not just household essentials.

You may be like me or you may be a window shopper – making a wish list of what might be in the basket if funds would allow.

Although sometimes the book of Revelation makes uncomfortable reading (or maybe its the preacher who makes it uncomfortable listening)Our reading today is a little bit like pressing our noses up against the window of All Saints Shop, we are being allowed a glimpse of heaven. But unlike the window shopping where we may not be able to afford the lovely things on display, this is a destination available to all of us who truly follow Christ and what we see is only a fraction of what is really inside.

How do you picture heaven? Heaven beautifully portrayed by many artists with Saints and stairways and clouds.

Or could it be more like this? Pictures drawn by children in Y5 & 6 at school.

In these pictures we see a bit of our heavens on earth – a football ground, chocolate fountain, a fast car , sunshine and rainbows all the way as well as the angelic host making an appearance !

In our reading we have a tiny peek of what heaven is really like. We are given a vision of community with single-minded focus that transcends anything imaginable in this earthly life. It is a worshipping community marked by diversity and it really does not matter if you can't sing in four part harmony, everyone sings the same song. A community that is bound by experience that transcends death. On one hand, the future is unknown, the details are blurred, and we do not know what the furniture is like in heaven. On the other hand, the future is secure. We will see God as he is.

This is powerful and evocative imagery. And so poignant for All Saints day.

What are you most impressed by today as we look through this window into heaven?.

Is it the enormous crowd? While in this world we see division by a myriad of “ isms” – racism, sexism, genderism. In this crowd, they are totally as one, no-one is excluded because he or she is different or a bit strange or behaves a bit oddly. Let's say hallelujah!

Wouldn't things be so different in our world if we could only experience this oneness of peoples and nations?

Is it the magnificent scene? There are people, angels, and heavenly creatures. Imagine yourself in that crowd, face to face with Christ, risen, triumphant. Every person is evidence that Jesus keeps his promises and is totally successful. Hallelujah!

But perhaps as you look through this window you are most impressed by what is happening. There is no rush, no sense of nervousness, no concern about the future. This is the future. Here are people who have experienced pain but are now engaged in joyous worship for everything that the lamb has done for them. God has wiped away every tear from their eyes. Hallelujah!

All Saints day is what it says on the packet – we remember all the saints, on earth and in heaven.

To be sure, it does not take away the hurt and frustration of the here and now. These visions of heaven do not remove the many, many experiences we have as we go through life, when we lose someone precious to us or the times when it is hard going and we don't seem to be making any headway and it's just a hard slog. But this vision of heaven gives us something to look forward to – a time when the presence of God will be something we will experience like never before, a time when we will feel a completeness that we've only ever caught glimpses of before. These glimpses of heaven colour everything that happens in our lives in this world.

Whatever impresses you most, I don't know about you but this little glimpse into heaven is amazing. This isn't just a lift for troubled minds. This is a God-given insight into a glorious new reality – planned, prepared, reserved and guaranteed for us by a merciful Father, a risen, victorious Saviour, and the all-accomplishing Spirit. And unlike any other window shopping it is available for each of us. What a wonderful, glorious tomorrow for all those who put their faith in Christ as their Saviour today! What a wonderful glorious day it is for the Saints in heaven.

Matthew 5: 2-12 The Beatitudes

While Revelation has allowed us this amazing glimpse of heaven, the reading from Matthew, the Beatitudes brings us very sharply back down to earth, the reality of now

The beatitudes are the promises given to all the Saints. Who are the Saints? St Peter? St Francis? Of course but also all of us who have committed ourselves to following the way of Christ. Whatever our life story, however it happened - if we say that we are followers of Jesus then we are Saints.

If we describe ourselves as Christians, followers of Christ it is because that we somehow we feel called, drawn attracted to Christ and like Martin Luther we say " here I stand, I can do no other". We are not strange or peculiar and we are certainly not better than anyone else ! we are still part of the human family but we are also part of Gods family.

To be a saint , to be part of Gods family implies that our lives need to be images of Gods life seen in the life of Jesus – we are to be little Christs in the world But look what they did to him!! its not easy to stand apart from society around us and say "that's not our way of doing things because we want to be Christ like". But that's exactly what we are called to do.

The beatitudes give us a vision of life in Christ rather than a set of instructions on which we will be examined. They imply that that the kingdom of God is a work in progress and we are part of that work, we are challenged to walk the talk that one day makes heaven our reality

As many of you know my favourite kind of shopping is shoe shopping.

I once thought I had died and gone to heaven when I got locked in the Clarks shoe shop and I not only had my own credit card but the household one as well!

But we need our shoes, we are all wearing shoes to day. They allow us to walk comfortably into the world in which we live in the now.

Shoes they come in all **shapes** and **styles** and **colours** and sometimes they are just **things of beauty**

Rather like us – different shapes , styles , colours and all things of beauty if Gods eyes.

Often we feel **mismatched** or **out of step** in the is world where we are called to be as Christ

But we walk in a world where

Blessed are those that mourn injustices that have not been put right in the world. If you are involved in Fair Trade, Christian Aid, Little Brothers ministry you count as one who mourns.

Let us say blessed

We walk with you.

Blessed are Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, those longing to see a better society. The Christians in our police forces and in positions of authority.

Let us say blessed

We walk with you.

Blessed are the pure in heart – those whose words and action match up. I pray that is us.

lets walk together, blessed

Blessed

Let us remember to live it every day, walking in the shoes of Jesus and

even when we find it difficult know that Jesus reassures we are not alone and great will be our reward (HT)

Lets make that our vision as Roy now leads us in prayer