Sunday 1st November 2026: All Saint's Day. BCP Benefice Holy Communion, Stonegrave.

All Saints' Day always takes me back to 1986. That year, Gill and I were married, I was promoted to executive officer in the civil service, and I was licensed as a Reader on All Saints' Day in York Minster. At that service, I had the wonderful privilege of reading the Gospel: the same Gospel I read today, the Beatitudes. All in all, 1986 was a pretty significant year. I took three important steps in discovering who I am. 'Why am I here?' and 'What am I doing?' were questions that went through my head then and have returned many times since.

Last year, at the confirmation service, Bishop Barry put the answer into words. As he gave the consecrated wafers to the candidates and all those receiving Holy Communion, he said something I had not heard before: 'Become who you are.' Those four words were not written down in the Common Praise or BCP liturgy. But he is a bishop and can say what he likes! Those words answered my questions, and I hope they answered the candidates' questions that day too.

Who are we to become? John answers that question in today's Epistle. *"See what love the Father has given us,"* he writes, "*that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are.*"

We are children of God, and we are to become who we are: saints, in fact. Is that why you have come here today, on All Saints' Day—to discover more of who you are? Why are you here? What are you doing here?

There are many reasons why you and I might be here today. Perhaps you simply want to worship God and give thanks for the gifts and blessings in your life. Perhaps this week you want to connect with friends and family or spend

time with like-minded souls. Or perhaps, if you're honest, you don't really want to be here at all but have come because of a loved one. Then again, you might be here because you know that God *wants* you to be—even *commands* you to remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. Truthfully, there are lots of reasons why people go to church, just as there were lots of reasons why people followed Jesus.

Then and now, people go to church or follow Jesus for a wide variety of reasons, but Jesus just wants to bless everyone who does. Regardless of the reason, Jesus wants to bless us all, to make us saints.
The message of the Beatitudes is as simple and as beautiful as that. When Jesus blesses us, we are blessed, no matter what else is happening in our lives. Nothing is more valuable or more important than being blessed by God, and when that happens, we are truly becoming who we are.

In his Epistle, John wants us to remember that we are loved as God's children, no matter why we are here or what is going on in our lives. Today, and always, we are God's children, loved by God, and there is no greater blessing. But what we will become has not yet been fully revealed. Our work, then, is not finished: the work of following Jesus, of being a Christian, and of becoming a saint.

That work won't be finished until we close our eyes on our last day on this earth. We are God's children now, but what we are becoming is still to be revealed. What are we becoming? Ourselves. We are becoming who we are—who we were created to be, made in God's love. Love is who we are. When we don't live according to love, we are outside of being human. We're not being our real selves. That is the work each of us is called to and it a work of a lifetime, to be our real selves in Christ.

John says in his first letter, *"Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us, and his love is perfected in us."*

Jesus wants us to build our lives on following him: to learn from him, and to keep building and growing throughout our lives, and as we do, he wants to *bless* us with love. 'Blessed' is the first word out of his mouth in this, his greatest sermon, and the most important word for us to hear today, no matter why you are here. To all, Jesus simply says: 'Blessed are you.' Blessed are you, for you are a beloved child of God, a saint, today and always.

Thanks be to God. Amen.