Back in the late 1970s, the British comedy group Monty Python made the "Life of Brian." If you know this movie, you might remember there's a scene in the film that depicts Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, the beginning of which was our Gospel reading today.

The movie scene focusses on a group of people who are so far away from Jesus they can't really hear what he's saying. Jesus moves through the Beatitudes way in the background and these folks yabber away at each other in the foreground, they're both distracted and trying to hear what he's saying. So they mishear and misunderstand his message.

Towards the end of the scene one of the women is triumphant, she's heard him, the meek! she says, blessed are the meek! Oh, that's nice isn't it, she goes on, I'm glad they're getting something 'cause they have a hell of a time![1]

The way the triumphant woman responds to what Jesus says, isn't that different from how many still respond to those famous words we hear in our English translation. That, somehow, being "blessed" is a consolation for those who are having the roughest go of it in this life.

But "blessed" here doesn't actually mean that at all. The English word, blessed, as it's used here, is the translation of the Greek that's the translation of a word in Biblical Hebrew that really means flourishing, fortunate, living rightly or well, being in a state of happiness, being in a state of blessedness.

It's a word that evokes being on the right path, being headed in the right direction, living as God intended for us live, perhaps.

[1] http://montypython.50webs.com/scripts/Life_of_Brian/3.htm

Those who are blessed, here, for Jesus, aren't passive recipients of a consolation blessing, instead they're the ones who are in a state of blessedness, they're on the right life path - they are the ones living in a way that will bring them fulfilment, that will have them see and know God; despite how they're perceived by the world they live in.

The characters in Monty Python's depiction of the Sermon on the Mount are pretty unaffected by the message they get from Jesus, they're distracted, they're squabbling amongst themselves over trivialities while he's preaching. Jesus doesn't have their full attention. So it's no wonder they can't quite make out what he means, don't really understand what it is he's saying.

It's not really too different from the attentiveness of the world to Jesus' message today.

The world has our ears attuned to big, loud messages, bombastic characters that demand our attention.

Our minds scan the world around us for signs that some kind of mighty power might one day, finally, forcibly shake some sense into this world of ours, and us.

This is the stuff that grabs our whole attention, this is the stuff we've been 'trained' to take notice of, spectacle, everything else just kind of runs in the background. We dip in and out, giving it as much attention as we can spare.

But if we're only hooked by what's BIG; if something that's LOUD is the only kind of message that'll get our full attention,

just like those characters in The Life of Brian, we're going to miss a lot of what Jesus is saying, miss or mishear what Jesus is speaking into the world; not really make any sense of it all, not really be affected one way or the other.

To hear Jesus, and to understand what he's saying, what he's teaching, we have to pay attention, there's no way around it. We have to turn away from the yabbering distractions popping off all around us, and lean in to really hear and to really understand that this is exactly the Good News we've been waiting for and longing to hear.

Because Jesus' message is about the fundamental re-ordering of life, the pulling of our attention away from the stuff and junk that clogs up our thinking, to instead notice the truth of what underpins it all, has always underpinned it all: relationship; relationship with God, relationship with one another. Notice it, pay attention to it, live for it. Because when we do, everything will be different.

But this message doesn't BOOM, it doesn't come in the form of a rowdy, soundbite-filled, rallying spectacle that's designed to convince us to change to our lives. What Jesus shares, he embodies; what he's teaching, he lives. By his life, by his relationships, Jesus makes the invisible truth and reality, the nature of God, visible, tangible: he forgives, he includes, he welcomes, he struggles, Jesus feeds people, cares for them, heals, he loves, he loves self-sacrificially, unconditionally. This is substance, not spectacle.

And we can completely miss it or misunderstand it, not even notice it, if we're not paying attention.

It's within the quiet, steady, and ongoing work of relationship that we will come to really see what this life is all about.

It’s relationship that teaches us about God’s provision, God’s generosity, the abundance that is this life! It’s by living for relationship that we can really hear Jesus’ speak, and understand the true purpose of our lives, how to live on the right path.

Relationships are complex and demanding, they bring together the knowings of heart, mind, and soul. They can be gift, they can be burden, they can be mysterious, but they must be lived.

We will flourish, we will be in a state of blessedness, when we live from and for relationship, our relationship with God and each another.

This is the quiet, constant, transforming work of love, that flows generatively from the heart of God, and is made real in our relationships.

Relationships will teach us, they will teach us about love, and woundedness, they will teach us about selfishness and selflessness, they will teach us about healing and about forgiveness, and they will prove to us, time and time again, that we need each other.

Relationships will teach us about Jesus, about discipleship; through the lens of relationship, we can figure out even the toughest of Jesus’ teachings; and relationships will course-correct us when we’ve gotten it wrong, and give us a way back onto the right path.

When we can actually hear it, we know Jesus’ message isn’t for others, or for some, it’s for every single one of us. And it’s definitely not a message of consolation, something nice for when life’s rough.

The world might have us looking and waiting for something dramatic to show us the way, but we have all we need right here, in each one of our relationships, God is here, waiting to be heard.

In a moment we'll celebrate and bless Jane and Sharon's relationship, the lifelong covenant they share and that gives shape to the way they live.

And, on this Feast Day of All Saints, we give thanks for our eternal relationships with the great cloud of witnesses, our ongoing relationships with those we love but see no longer, relationships that death cannot end, and we celebrate these connections of love and the enduring power of these relationships to influence and impact our lives today.

And we do stuff like this so we remember to pay attention, pay attention to God and each other; care for our relationships, care less about the jabbering and yabbering that would have us distracted.

Distracted from re-ordering our lives around relationship, around love; around our interdependence, our inseparability from God and each other, confident we have all we need, whether we are in sickness or in good health, in times of plenty as well as in times of want, in times of anguish as well as in times of great joy.

This is what it is to be blessed.