

Fourth Sunday After Epiphany
January 29, 2023

Who are the blessed ones of God? For Micah, they are those who do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God. For Paul, they are the ones who find wisdom in the weakness of the cross. For Jesus, they are the poor, the meek, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, those who mourn, and those who hunger for righteousness. In baptism we find our blessed identity and calling in this countercultural way of living and serving.

Greeting

The Grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the Communion of the Holy Spirit be with you.
And also with you.

Confession and Forgiveness

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,
who makes all things new,
whose mercy endures forever.

Amen.

Trusting in God's mercy, let us confess our sin.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Holy One, source of our renewal,
**we confess that we are wrapped up in sin,
and cannot free ourselves.
We have not practiced your righteousness.
Our hearts have turned away from you.**

**For the sake of the world you so love,
forgive us,
that we may be reconciled to one another
for the glory of your holy name.**

Amen.

Thus says our God:

“The former things have come to pass
and new things I now declare.”

God's mercy makes us new.

We are forgiven in the name of † Christ our Savior.

Amen.

Gathering Hymn

“Gather Us In”

#532 vs. 1,3,4

Prayer of the Day

Holy God, you confound the world's wisdom in giving your kingdom to the lowly and the pure in heart. Give us such a hunger and thirst for justice, and perseverance in striving for peace, that in our words and deeds the world may see the life of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

Reading: Micah 6:1-8

¹Hear what the LORD says:

Rise, plead your case before the mountains,
and let the hills hear your voice.

²Hear, you mountains, the controversy of the LORD,
and you enduring foundations of the earth;
for the LORD has a controversy with his people,
and he will contend with Israel.

³“O my people, what have I done to you?

In what have I wearied you? Answer me!

⁴For I brought you up from the land of Egypt,
and redeemed you from the house of slavery;
and I sent before you Moses,
Aaron, and Miriam.

⁵O my people, remember now what King Balak of Moab devised,
what Balaam son of Beor answered him,

and what happened from Shittim to Gilgal,
that you may know the saving acts of the LORD.”

⁶“With what shall I come before the LORD,
and bow myself before God on high?
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,
with calves a year old?

⁷Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams,
with ten thousands of rivers of oil?
Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression,
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?”

⁸He has told you, O mortal, what is good;
and what does the LORD require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Children’s Message

Gospel: Matthew 5:1-12

¹When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. ²Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

³“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

⁵“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

⁶“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

⁷“Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

⁸“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

⁹“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

¹⁰“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹“Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹²Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to You, O Christ

Sermon

People of God, grace to you and peace from God, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. AMEN

Jesus shows them.

He has told them what life with him will look like. He has told them to come and see. He sees them again and says follow me. And now, he shows them.

We know this teaching of his as the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus gathered with his disciples, more accurately it seems, Jesus escapes with his disciples. “When he saw the crowd, he went up the mountain.”

Was that to get away from the crowds?

Was it to project so the masses could hear what he had to say?

We don't know.

We do know, though, that he went up the mountain. "And after he sat down, his disciples came to him."

And it is then that he began speak. And he taught them.

The Lutheran Study Bible offers two insights here that have been rolling around in my head for the better part of this week. The first is what Luther has to say about God's spoken word. "Luther understands God's spoken word as creative power, not information. When God speaks, God's word creates what it declares. God's word called the universe and everything in it into existence. The beatitudes create reality."

In this reality those that we don't see as being blessed, are indeed blessed. The poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, the hungry and thirsty, the merciful, and the list goes on. That list does not seem to be a list of those that we think of to be blessed. But here we are. That is the reality that Jesus speaks into existence.

The second nugget that the Lutheran Study Bible offers is this question:

If Jesus teaches *who* to bless, not *how* to be blessed, how would that change your life?

Read that again. Think about it.

We live in a give me give me give me society. Like it or not, that is our reality.

But does it change our outlook on this reality if we hear Jesus' teaching here as a call to consider how it is that we bless others?

Jesus tells us to bless others. That list that we hear is Jesus calling us to be a blessing to others. Those who are on that list. That is what this is all about. It is about God in Jesus Christ making this a reality for all people.

People of God this is our call as church. This is what God in Jesus Christ calls us to do and be as God's people in the world. This is a call for us to experience the life changing wonder of Jesus teaching us WHO to bless, and not HOW to be blessed.

This means that for us, in finding the answer to what it will mean to Follow Jesus as he has called us to do, that we are called into action. We are called into action as God's hands and feet to realize who it is that we are to bless, and not simply celebrate that we ourselves have been blessed.

And Jesus ends this introduction portion of his sermon with a bit of a stark reminder of what is to come. It is a stark reminder of this blessing that we have received, a blessing that is a call to bless others.

You will be persecuted. People will utter all kinds of evil against you falsely because of being a Jesus follower. Rejoice and be glad in that, for your reward is great in heaven. Those who came before you in the faith have been persecuted all the same.

But, that does not change the call.

The call remains to be a blessing to others.

The saying I'm sure many of you have maybe heard goes,

"You are blessed to be a blessing."

Yes. We are blessed. We are blessed with the wonder and amazement of being called as God's people and to live into the promise of what that means for us, but it does not stop at "you are blessed."

To be blessed is to ponder how it is that we bless others, in everything that we do and say.

That is what God calls us to.

Thanks be to God. AMEN

Song of the Day

“Blest Are They”

#728

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,

Creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,

born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate,

was crucified, died, and was buried;

he descended to the dead.

On the third day he rose again;

he ascended into heaven,

he is seated at the right hand of the Father,

and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,

the holy catholic church, the communion of saints,

the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body,

and the life everlasting. Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

Called together to follow Jesus, we pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

Cultivate humility in your church. In gatherings of every size, teach us to boast only in the cross. Shape your church to be people of kindness, generosity, and justice. Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

The foundations of the earth bear witness to your faithfulness; the mountains and hills echo with your holiness.

When we mistreat your creation, show us the error of our ways. Inspire us with reverent awe to honor all you have made. Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

You make foolish the wisdom of the world. Raise up honorable leaders who seek justice, love mercy, and pursue peace. Frustrate plans that are corrupt, wicked, and self-seeking. Prosper the work of peacemakers (*local and international reconciliation efforts may be named*). Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

Bless all whom the world rejects. Accompany those who are regarded as foolish, weak, low, and despised; reveal your power and presence at work where it is least expected. Give your life, strength, and wisdom to all in need

(*We pray especially for Peyton, Matt, David, Cassie, Verna, Irene, Connie, Clarice, Steve, Kathy, Val, Jacob, Keith and JoJo, Bob and Joanne, Bill and Bonnie, Frank and Heather, Bob and Sonja, Bill and Betty, Tom and Kay, Don and Betty*). Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

As with your people Israel, remind this congregation of your saving acts. Remind us how your faithfulness brought us through difficulties and sustained us despite our weaknesses. Establish the cross as the center of our life together. Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

receive our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Praise to you for your blessed saints in every time and place (*especially*). Trusting you accompanied them in poverty, persecution, and in every trial, we trust you abide with your people always. Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

receive our prayer.

We bring to you our needs and hopes, O God, trusting your wisdom and power revealed in Christ crucified.

Amen.

Offering

Offertory Prayer

Liberating God,
you break the bonds of injustice
and let the oppressed go free.
Receive these offerings in thanksgiving
for all your works of merciful power,
and shape us as people of your justice and freedom.
You we magnify and adore, through Jesus our Savior,
Amen.

Words of Institution

Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen

Communion

Prayer

Holy One,
we thank you for the healing
that springs forth abundantly from this table.
Renew our strength to do justice,
love kindness,
and journey humbly with you.
Amen.

Blessing

The God who faithfully brings forth justice
and breaks the oppressor's rod
✠ bless, strengthen, and uphold you,
today and always.
Amen.

Sending Song

“Sent Forth by God's Blessing”

#547

Dismissal

Go in peace, to love and serve the Lord.
Okay! We will! Thanks be to God!
And all of Good Shepherd said,
AMEN!

Annual Meeting is following worship today. Annual Reports are outside the office and online.

January Financial Snapshot

The numbers:		What's to come:	
Total Revenue	\$17,497	1 more Sunday Offerings	
Total Expenses	\$24,539	Last January Offering:	\$17,921
Current Difference	-\$7,042	Budgeted Expense/Revenue	\$29,017

On February 5th we will be celebrating Scout Sunday as we will have scouts from Troop 124 helping lead worship and serving a wonderful brunch following worship! We hope to see you there!

Interfaith Prayer

**Wednesday, Feb.8, 6:30 p.m. Unitarian Universalist Church.
421 S. Farwell St.**

We will have Ruby's Pantry here next week on Thursday, Feb. 2. The truck arrives at approximately 2 p.m. and distribution is 3:30-5:30. If you would like to volunteer, we appreciate any time you are available. We always appreciate those who can come later and help with clean up.