

## INTRODUCTIONS

*These may be included in the Parish Magazine, in the weekly service sheet, or by the lector as an introduction to the readings.*

### **Micah 6 : 1-8**

This passage contains a phrase which takes us back to those Magi of Epiphany Sunday. 'What shall I bring to the Lord?' asks the prophet, pondering his response to God's saving work. Bring justice, bring humility, answers the Lord.

### **Psalms 15**

### **1 Corinthians 1 : 18-31**

This reading continues from the past two Sundays. Paul is trying gently but firmly to reprimand the Corinthian Christians for their behaviour in and out of church. He tells them no-one should claim to be cleverer than the rest, because we do not find God by being wise - God simply reveals himself to the simple in heart.

### **Matthew 5 : 1-12**

In these strange paradoxes we call the Beatitudes, Jesus teaches us who are the holy people in God's sight, the ones who will find his blessings as his kingdom comes.

[http://bible.oremus.org/?show\\_adj=no&passages=%0AMicah%206:%201-8%0Acw%20Psalms%2015%0A1%20Corinthians%201:%2018-31%0AMatthew%205:%201-12](http://bible.oremus.org/?show_adj=no&passages=%0AMicah%206:%201-8%0Acw%20Psalms%2015%0A1%20Corinthians%201:%2018-31%0AMatthew%205:%201-12)



## COLLECTS OF THE DAY

### **Collect one**

O God,  
who knowest us to be set  
in the midst of so many and great dangers,  
that by reason of the frailty of our nature  
we cannot always stand upright;  
Grant to us such strength and protection,  
as may support us in all dangers,  
and carry us through all temptations;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Collect two**

Creator God,  
who in the beginning  
commanded the light to shine out of darkness:  
We pray that the light of the glorious gospel of Christ  
may dispel the darkness of ignorance and unbelief,  
shine into the hearts of all your people,  
and reveal the knowledge of your glory  
in the face of Jesus Christ our Lord.

**PRAYERS**

Lord, you have taught us that whatever we do without love is worth nothing: send your Holy Spirit and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of love, the true bond of peace and of all virtues, without which whoever lives is counted dead before you; grant this, for your only Son Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

*BCP. Quinquagesima*

Let us pray [for a greater love of God and of our fellows.]

Lord our God, help us to love you with all our hearts and to love all people as you love them. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen. *AAPB*

Living God, in Christ you make all things new: transform the poverty of our nature by the riches of your grace, and in the renewal of our lives make known your glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen. *APBA*

Perfect Light of revelation,  
as you shone in the life of Jesus,  
whose epiphany we celebrate,  
so shine in us and through us,  
that we may become beacons of truth and compassion,  
enlightening all creation with deeds of justice and mercy. Amen.

God,  
You spoke your word  
and revealed your good news in Jesus, the Christ.  
Fill all creation with that word again,  
so that by proclaiming your joyful promises to all nations  
and singing of your glorious hope to all peoples,  
we may become one living body,  
your incarnate presence on the earth. Amen.

To God who welcomes all in love,  
let us pray for the good of the church  
and the concerns of those in need.

*Intercessions concluding with:*

God of every land and nation,  
you have created all people  
and you dwell among us in Jesus Christ.  
listen to the cries of those who pray to you,

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and grant that, as we proclaim the greatness of your name,  
all people will know the power of love at work in the world.  
we ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sisters and brothers,  
let us lift our hearts in faith  
to the one who hears all prayers  
and holds close all those in need.

*Intercessions concluding with:*

Holy God, you gather the whole universe  
into your radiant presence  
and continually reveal your Son as our Savior.  
Bring healing to all wounds,  
make whole all that is broken,  
speak truth to all illusion,  
and shed light in every darkness,  
that all creation will see your glory and know your Christ. Amen.

God our deliverer,  
you walk with the meek and the poor,  
the compassionate and those who mourn,  
and you call us to walk humbly with you.  
When we are foolish, be our wisdom;  
When we are weak, be our strength;  
that, as we learn to do justice  
and to love mercy,  
your rule may come as blessing. Amen.

God of heaven and earth, whose power is made fully known in your pardoning mercy: ever  
fill us with your grace, that, entering more fully into your promises, we may come to share  
in the good things of heaven; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. *Methodist Worship*

Lord, you have taught us that all our doings without love are worth nothing. Send your Holy  
Spirit, and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of love, the true bond of peace and  
of all virtues; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. *Methodist Worship*

God our creator, who in the beginning commanded the light to shine out of darkness: we  
pray that the light of the glorious gospel of Christ may dispel the darkness of ignorance  
and unbelief, shine into the hearts of all your people, and reveal the knowledge of your  
glory in the face of Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the  
unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

God of heaven, you send the gospel to the ends of the earth and your messengers to  
every nation: send your Holy Spirit to transform us by the good news of everlasting life in  
Jesus Christ our Lord.

Eternal Lord, our beginning and our end: bring us with the whole creation to your glory,  
hidden through past ages and made known in Jesus Christ our Lord.

## **DIALOGUED PRAYER BASED ON MATTHEW'S VERSION OF BEATITUDES**

Lord Jesus, you said,  
"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."  
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## The Fourth Sunday of Epiphany - January 29, 2017

Keep us from being preoccupied with money and worldly goods, and with trying to increase them at the expense of justice.

Lord Jesus, you said,  
"Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth."  
Help us not to be ruthless with one another, and to eliminate the discord and violence that exists in the world around us.

Lord Jesus, you said,  
"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."  
Let us not be impatient under our own burdens and unconcerned about the burdens of others.

Lord Jesus, you said,  
"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they shall be filled."  
Make us thirst for you, the fountain of all holiness, and actively spread your influence in our private lives and in society.

Lord Jesus, you said,  
"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy."  
Grant that we may be quick to forgive and slow to condemn.

Lord Jesus, you said,  
"Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God."  
Free us from our senses and our evil desires, and help us to fix our eyes on you.

Lord Jesus, you said,  
"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God."  
Aid us to make peace in our families, in our country, and in the world.

Lord Jesus, you said,  
"Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of justice,  
for the kingdom of heaven is theirs."  
Make us willing to suffer for the sake of right rather than to practice injustice; and do not let us discriminate against our neighbours and oppress and persecute them. AMEN

### PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 1

*Presider or deacon*

**God chooses the weak to shame the strong. Let us pray for all those who in their weakness need justice and kindness.**

*Deacon or other leader*

**For the holy catholic church throughout the world.**

**Lord, have mercy.**

For *N* our bishop, for presbyters, deacons, and all who minister in Christ, and for all the holy people of God.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For this holy gathering and for all who enter with faith, reverence, and fear of God.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For this country, for all nations and their leaders, and for our community.

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**Lord, have mercy.**

For all those in danger and need: the sick and the suffering, prisoners, captives, and their families, the hungry, homeless, and oppressed.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For the dying, and for those who care for them.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For ourselves, our families, friends, and companions on the way, and all those we love.

**Lord, have mercy.**

Let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ.

**To you, O Lord.**

*Presider*

Lord, who teaches us to walk humbly with our God, hear our fervent prayers and lead all the peoples of the world to your holy mountain; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## **PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**                      **2**

As we offer our petitions before God, let us hunger and thirst for righteousness, saying, "In faith we pray," and respond, "Lord hear us."

For the poor and the poor in spirit that they might know what it means to be filled. In faith we pray,

**Lord hear us**

For Prime Minister \_\_\_\_\_ and the leaders of this country, that they might serve with humility and meekness. In faith we pray,

**Lord hear us**

For those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, especially prisoners of conscience in \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, that they might be freed. In faith we pray,

**Lord hear us**

For those who make peace in our parish, that they might rejoice in their work.

In faith we pray,

**Lord hear us**

For those preparing for baptism and confirmation, that their commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ might not waver, even as people revile them, persecute them, and utter all kinds of evil against them falsely. In faith we pray,

**Lord hear us**

For those who mourn the loss of family or friends, that they might discover Christ's gentle presence in their midst. In faith we pray,

**Lord hear us**

God of Mercy, you cause your children to hunger for righteousness. Help us to enact our prayers as we leave this place of worship. For the sake of Jesus Christ. Lord hear us. **Amen.**

## POST COMMUNION PRAYER

Generous Lord,  
in word and eucharist we have proclaimed  
the mystery of your love.  
Help us so to live out our days  
that we may be signs of your wonders in the world;  
through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

## LECTIONARY NOTES

### Micah 6:1-8:

This is a passage that I think makes a lot of people's favorite scripture list. And with good reason. Good stuff here. I'm stuck on the word "require" in verse 8. I don't know Hebrew - I only got around to Greek in school. But require - that's a strong word. We're not recommended to do these things. We're required. What else are you required to do? How do you treat these requirements, as opposed to those God sets out for us?

another good word in this passage - "the controversy of the Lord" - what a label! Who would want to be called God's controversy?

another passage (like Psalm 51, among others) where the author recognizes that it is not the acts of sacrifice and ritual themselves God desires, but the devoted hearts that bring such things to God. God wants us.

do justice, love kindness, walk humbly. What would happen if everything we did as a church was based on, or could be tied to one of these three things? Probably, anything that doesn't fall into one of those commands is something we should examine more carefully!

### Psalm 15:

Who may dwell with God? Those who are blameless. Eek! If that is the extent of the list, we're in trouble. But the psalmist gives us quite a list to which to aspire: do what is right. speak the truth. do not slander. do not do evil. do not reproach. do not lend at interest. do not take a bribe.

On the other hand, as much as we think it is quite a list, why is it so hard to measure up to those requirements? Is it so hard to love? We so desire to be loved. Why is it so hard to love others?

### 1 Corinthians 1:18-31:

"For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing..." This verse is repeated from last week's reading. I don't know what to make of this verse, because I too often see it used as a "Jesus is the only way, see?" tool. But let's revamp it. An instrument of weakness is made into an instrument of power. That is what God does to things. Gives them a whole new life, and a whole new meaning.

That theme carries into the whole passage - God doesn't just change meanings of things around, but meanings of people. We're flipped inside out by this 'foolishness' of Jesus Christ.

### Matthew 5:1-12:



Wow - the Beatitudes and Micah 6:8 in one Sunday? I'm always conflicted when there are multiple really great passages on the same Sunday. Which to preach on?

Another conflict: Do you prefer Matthew or Luke's recording of the Beatitudes? In Luke 6, Jesus gives the "blessings and woes" which are very tangible. Blessed are you who hunger for you will be filled. The implication is of physical hunger. Matthew gives a spiritual spin to everything from Jesus' lips: blessed are the poor in spirit, those hungry for righteousness. Some people prefer Luke's straightforward attention through Jesus' words to tangible needs. Personally, I'm glad they are recorded in two different ways. We need both!

In a way, Matthew almost gives us here another set of spiritual gifts: Mercy. Peacemaker. Spirit.

Most of these make sense to me: the one who is making peace is God's child. The meek inherit, those seeking righteousness are filled. But what about the poor-in-spirit part? What do you think is meant by being poor in spirit? Is this someone who is dejected/depressed? Someone who has lost their way, turned from God, rejected God? What's going on with your soul that you would classify as being "poor in spirit?"

*By Beth Quick*

## **SERMON STARTER**

**1**

**Micah 6: 1-8:**

**Bringing the Common Good "Before the Lord"**

The divorce between private and public life cuts both ways. It is not only personal life that requires attention, but also the common good. That was the prophet Micah's position 27 centuries ago when he answered the question: "With what shall I come before the Lord?"

Then and now that is the question. "What is good" (Micah 6:8), then and now? What happens when doing social justice is cut off from private pious words? The economy prospers, but "your wealthy are full of violence" (6:12). Public marketplaces have "wicked scales and a bag of dishonest weights" (6:11). People think they can "better" themselves with amoral financial transactions, forgetting "the saving acts of the Lord" (6:5). Even the mountains and hills that are polluted by such a culture hear that "the Lord has a controversy with his people" (6:2).

What do we bring to God? Actions, actions that "do justice." Actions that forgive as we have been forgiven: "love mercy." Actions that are genuine and without hypocritical pretense: "walk humbly with your God" (6:8). Those are the deeds of "the good life," deeds that build a community out of the common good, deeds in "a day for the building of your walls" (7:11). The community that does those deeds is creative in problemsolving, forgiving sins, and moving on, moving on "to beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks" (4:3). *By John Gibbs*

## **SERMON STARTER**

**2**

**Matt 5:1-12**

**He went up on a mountainside**

The beauty of the Mount of Beatitudes overlooking Sea of Galilee. When it comes to lessons in practical Christian Living, nothing surpasses the Sermon explaining where happiness is to be found... *Blessed = makarios = true happiness....*

**1. AN HONEST HEART - 3 *blessed are the poor in spirit theirs is the kingdom of***

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*heaven - ptochos* = destitute. A person who is poor in spirit is not "poor spirited" - is someone who has an honest opinion of their spiritual condition - destitute! The person who will admit Spiritual poverty is well on their way to faith in Christ for salvation.

**2. A HEAVY HEART** - *4 blessed are those who mourn for they will be comforted.*

The heart that mourns over sin is the heart that will confess and find the comfort of forgiveness of sins & the promise of eternal life.

**3. A HUMBLE HEART** - *blessed are the meek – praus = controlled and disciplined - they shall inherit the earth v5 -*

According to Haddon Robinson, "Tied up in the word meek is the concept of power under control, the idea of being submissive to someone greater than ourselves."

**4. A HUNGRY HEART** – *those who hunger and thirst for righteousness – will be filled* 6. To hunger and thirst after righteousness should be a characteristic of every Christian. We should want to please God by doing what is right. We should hunger and thirst for the things of God and His word and apply them to our lives. We need food and drink for our physical well-being - so too for our spiritual survival & development - the way to grow in the faith of Christ!  
*By Norman Porteus*

**SERMON STARTER**

**3**

In the Monty Python movie "Life of Brian" Jesus goes up on the mountain side to teach the people. There is a huge crowd gathered around him - so huge that some of the people who are on the outer edge of the crowd cannot hear his words and must ask others what the master has said. As Jesus pronounces what have become known as the beatitudes - one of the characters in the movie - desperate to know what Jesus is saying asks a man who is ahead of him the crowd ?"What is he saying - what is he saying?" The man checks with a person in front of him, who in turn checks with someone else and then the message is relayed back the Master says - "Blessed Are The Cheese Makers."

This is perhaps just a reminder to us of how often we get wrong what Jesus has said. and as a way of making us think about who is blessed and who is not. Who are the blessed ones anyway? Who is it that God favours? And who is that God looks askance at? Who is it that God warns - that God threatens - with troubles and woes?

If you listen to the preachers on cable TV and in some churches the answer seems clear. Those who succeed in life are the ones that God favours: - Those who have money in their pockets, smiles on their faces, well behaved children and who do not get sick without a miraculous healing next week in church. These are the blessed - while those who struggle with depression and despair, - those who live in poverty who perform menial tasks each day - those who serve others rather than living as their equals - and whose children are an embarrassment - these are the cursed and the afflicted. But is it true? Is this what Jesus taught?

The author of the third gospel - the Physician we know as Luke - clearly thought a great deal about whom God blesses and whom God does not. I say that because Luke's account of what we call the Sermon on The Mount is different than Matthew's version. Luke gives us a different view of Jesus' sermon, and in some ways a clearer view. First - in Luke - the sermon is not set on a hillside - where Jesus can look over the top of the crowd and hand down the word from on high to those who are beneath him. Rather it is set on a plain - on a level place - where a large crowd has gathered and pressed in upon him - and



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where Jesus has been walking among them - healing their diseases and curing their afflictions. And secondly in Luke Jesus announces a series of matching curses or woes: Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God - woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled - woe to you are full now, for you will be hungry. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh - woe to you who are laughing now, for you will mourn and weep. Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on the account of the Son of Man, - woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets." Think about it. What does this list say about our aspirations? About our dreams? About our rushing out to buy lottery tickets so that we might win the big one?

God reverses all our expectations and we need to know it. God understands our pain, poverty, despair, fear. The promise of Christ in the Sermon on the Plain in the Gospel according to Luke, is that there is joy on the other side of grief, laughter on the other side of tears, fulfilment on the other side of hunger, and joyful reward on the other side of the abuse and the ridicule we receive because we cling to him and live in a way that is strange to the world - a way that is opposed to the world's way.

*By Charles Royden*

### WEB SOURCES

Requirements by the Rev Beth Quigg  
<http://bethquigg.blogspot.co.uk/search/label/Fourth%20Epiphany>

Blessed Are Those Who Mourn," the Rev. Carol Howard Merritt, Day 1  
<http://day1.org/2543-blessed-are-those-who-mourn>

### CHILDREN

Worshiping with Children, Epiphany 4, Including children in the congregation's worship, using the Revised Common Lectionary, Carolyn C. Brown  
<http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.co.uk/2014/01/year-fourth-sunday-after-epiphany.html>

"Directions," Fran Woodruff, On The Chancel Steps  
<https://onthechancelsteps.wordpress.com/2014/01/20/directions/>

"Weekly Devotions," Faith Formation Journeys  
<http://faithformationjourneys.org/?p=1375>

"Sermon of the Week," / "Mensajes para ninos," Sermons 4 Kids, Charles Kirkpatrick, Object Lessons & Children's Sermons, Coloring Pages, Puzzles.  
[Sermons4Kids.com](http://Sermons4Kids.com).

### HYMN SUGGESTIONS

From the eastern mountains (Evelyns)  
Amazing Grace  
Songs of thankfulness and praise (St George's Windsor)  
Beauty for Brokenness  
Bethlehem of noblest cities (Stuttgart)

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