

GOSPEL LESSON—Matthew 5:1-12

Our Gospel Lesson is called The Beatitudes. "Beatitude," means: supreme blessing. In this section of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus told us about our blessings. (I have heard these called the "be attitudes," implying that they are rules for living. We always need to be careful not to turn a Gospel statement of Christ into a law.) Christ did not come into the world as a new lawgiver, He came to fulfil the law in our stead, and to give us the blessedness of His person and work. We live in a blind and sin laden world. In the beatitudes, Jesus pronounced the supreme difference between what the world considers to be a blessing and the wonder of what God knows will make us to be blessed.

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

Ⓟ Almighty God, You are the fountain of all mercies, and the source of all comfort. You are more ready to hear than we are to pray. You are more ready to save than we are to repent. As we lift our hearts to You we give You our humble and heartfelt thanks for all Your gifts and graces.

For the spirit of wisdom and understanding in Your Word and will, for the gift of counsel and might in season of adversity, and for the grace of spiritual knowledge, we thank You. But most of all we thank and praise You, O Father, for sending Your Son and for the promise that in Him is life.

We confess that our pride has prevented us from being poor in spirit. We have trouble being meek when the world rewards those who are aggressive. We have expected mercy without being merciful. We have failed to rejoice in our suffering.

Enlighten our minds, that we may know Your will and walk in Your paths. Lead us in all truth, and instill in us charity toward all mankind. Grant us a larger faith in Your mighty power, a deeper trust in Your merciful providence, and a more perfect love of Your Son. Help us see in Him Your image, the revelation of Your grace, the reflection of Your glory, the incarnation of Your Word, the manifestation of Your presence, and the evidence of Your care for all the children of world--whatever age they might be.

Comfort and bless those who are afflicted, that they may in love perceive Your good and gracious will and find release from all their trials. Preserve and maintain good government, integrity, honest citizenship, and dignity. Put down all who are self-seeking opportunists, all who intend revolution and strife, and suppress those who seek power through the weakness of others.

Hear us as we bring to You our private petitions. **(Time of silent prayer.)**

Keep us and all Your people in the unity of the faith and in oneness with Christ through His Church. We ask all these things in His name and for the sake of Jesus.

© Amen.

EPIPHANY FOUR

Chant Tone



Introit

For the Lord knows the way of the
—righteous,*
but the way of the wicked will —perish.

Blessèd is the man who walks not in
the counsel of the —wicked,*
nor stands in the way of sinners,
nor sits in the seat of —scoffers;
but his delight is in the law | of the Lord,*
and on His law he meditates | day
and night.

He is like a tree planted by streams of
water that yields its fruit in its season,
and its leaf does not —wither.*

In all that he does, he —prosper.

The wicked | are not so,*
but are like chaff that the wind
| drives away.

Therefore the wicked will not stand in
the —judgment,*
nor sinners in the congregation of
the —righteous.

Glory be to the Father and | to the Son*
and to the Holy —Spirit;
as it was in the be —ginning,*
is now, and will be forever. —Amen.

For the Lord knows the way of the
—righteous,*
but the way of the wicked will —perish.

*(Antiphon, Psalm 1:6;
Psalm 1:1-5)*

Collect of the Day

Almighty God, You know we live in the midst of so many dangers that in our frailty we cannot stand upright. Grant strength and protection to support us in all dangers and carry us through all temptations; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever.

Gradual

Praise the Lord, all —nations!*

Extol Him, all —peoples!

For great is His | Love toward us,*

and the faithfulness of the Lord endures for —ever.

Ascribe to the Lord the glory | due His name;*
bring an offering and come in | to His courts!

(Psalm 117:1-2a; 96:8)

ENTRANCE PRAYER: Lord God, almighty, eternal Judge of Heaven and Earth, we, Your unworthy servants, approach Your throne in earnest and heartfelt prayer. We boast not of our own righteousness, for we have none that counts before Your Holiness. We come to You clothed in the merits of Your Son Jesus Christ. Help us recognize Your mercy in calling us out of the world and into Your service. Set Your grace on our hearts and minds that our lives may reflect Your goodness. As we are spiritually hungry, O Father, let us be fed with the Bread of Heaven, and as we are the cast outs of the Earth allow us to hear and truly perceive the Gospel. This we ask in the name of our compassionate Savior. Amen (So be it, Lord.)

WE REJOICE BECAUSE WE ARE BLESSED. In the Beatitudes, Jesus presents us with our spiritual reality. When we give the problems and control of our life over to God we will find true peace, we will inherit the universe. When we suffer persecution for the sake of the Gospel, we are simply enduring a small part of what Jesus suffered for our sin and endured to make us members of His Eternal kingdom. And what is a moment of suffering in the kingdom, compared with the eternity of glory yet to come? (Or put another way, what is one moment of suffering compared with an eternity of suffering?) We welcome all who have come out to worship on this day. Together we rejoice and are made glad by the fellowship we have with each other and with God.

THEME OF THE DAY:

Blessèd Is The Believer

INTROIT—(Antiphon: Psalm 1:6;) Psalm 1:1-5

Psalm 1 was written by whomever collected up the Psalms (probably Ezra) as an introduction. It is paired with our other propers as an exposition of: "good verses evil," "life and death," that we would follow the blessing and avoid the curse. We sing all of Psalm 1, as it says so very much in only six verses.

COLLECT

Suffering is the only thing that is common to people in the world. Christians know that suffering comes as a result of sin. We ask, therefore to be blessed by God with the ability to avoid temptations and with His strength and protection to avoid anything that is dangerous to our salvation.

OLD TESTAMENT LESSON—Micah 6:1-8

"What does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." The first part of our lesson is a Job-like request from God. God tells us that if we can defend our sin, we should approach Him and make the case. Then we are told of the grace God has shown to His people. The end is the statement of judgment from God. God doesn't need or want anything from us. He is giving us the ability to believe in the work and the person of His Son and present ourselves in humility before Him. We are very blessed indeed to be allowed to have a knowledge of God that allows us to have a conversation with God in the first place.

GRADUAL—Psalm 117:1-2a, 96:8

Psalm 117 has two verses. It is a general song of praise for all God has done for us, especially in making us over into His people, His disciples. Psalm 96 was sung as the Ark was moved into Jerusalem. It looks forward to the reign of the Christ when the Gentiles will join in the celebration of the kingdom.

EPISTLE LESSON—1 Corinthians 1:18-31

The Apostle Paul was one of those big brained people who knows what he is talking about, and had the training to clearly present his information. A group came from Corinth to argue with Paul. They had become influenced by others to abandon Paul's clear exposition of the Gospel and instead turn to a philosophy of works. This letter was designed to convince the Corinthians to set aside the false and continue in the true. He begin with the foolishness argument. It is almost certainly something he was personally forced to confront as it was his own supposed wisdom that caused him to persecute Christians before being confronted on the road to Damascus. We are clearly blessed in the foolishness of God choosing us to believe.