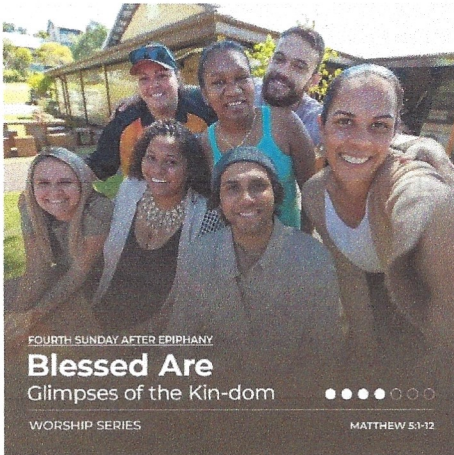

*As we unite in worship today, we extend a warm welcome to each one present.
May we together experience the presence of God*

+++++

We Gather to Prepare Our Hearts to Meet Our Lord



**Prelude
Welcome
Announcements/Joys & Concerns**

This week, we look at what are called the Beatitudes, the first part of the Sermon on the Mount. Now, some have said in lieu of posting the Ten Commandments in courthouses and on city lawns, that perhaps instead what we ought to post in our courts of law would be the Beatitudes.

Don't you think "Blessed are the merciful" might read differently on the wall of a criminal court? But then, others say we couldn't do that, because that would simply be impractical. It wouldn't fit in the place; because the courthouse is a place of law, not grace.

So, do the Beatitudes function like the law? Do they simply show us how far short we fall from what we are supposed to be? Do they layer guilt upon guilt on us so that we turn in utter despair to the Savior, confessing our complete worthlessness?

That is how some have presented these verses—a measuring rod for entrance into the kingdom of God. But if that is true, then why did Jesus introduce each verse with the word "blessed"?

It doesn't seem to me that Jesus would set us up for layers of guilt and then use the word "blessed" or "happy" to describe the condition we can't reach.

So, maybe these aren't law. Maybe the Beatitudes are something other than a challenge to better living, or - as some have presented them - a psychology of happiness. Maybe they are something more.

What if Jesus began his teaching ministry with a word of encouragement instead of an impossible standard to attain?

What if the Beatitudes were a snapshot of the community of faith instead of a measuring rod? What if Jesus was saying, Blessed is the community who makes room for peacemakers? Blessed is the community who makes room for the meek, for those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, who are poor in spirit. Blessed is the community who makes room those who mourn at the brokenness of the world, who is unstained by the impurity of the world. Blessed is the community who knows persecution is inevitable and still decides to make room for those the world thinks are unimportant.”

Jesus was getting out the albums and inviting us to look again and see who we are, see what is among us. He was opening those folders we had forgotten and showing us our true selves. Sure, there is a call here as well; I’m not dismissing that. But it is not an impossible call because it is already among us in the community of faith. We learn from one another because we are gifted; we are blessed in different ways.

So, today your directive is to take time to take a good look at the snapshot of the community of faith. You might be surprised at how blessed you are.

CALL TO WORSHIP

(inspired by Matthew 5:3-12, Luke 6:20-22)

Happy are we
when our treasures cannot be quantified.
Happy are we
when our knowledge is tempered by mystery.
Happy are we
when our pain is held in the balm of love.
Happy are we
when our delight comes from beyond ourselves.

BEATITUDE ACCLAMATION

Wonderful is the God of Christ, who gathers the poor of the earth.
Glorious is our God, who wipes away the tears of sorrow.
Wonderful is the God of Christ, who gives inheritance to the meek.
Glorious is our God, who satisfies the hunger of the just.
Wonderful is the God of Christ, who gives mercy to the merciful.
Glorious is our God, who gives vision to the pure in heart.
Wonderful is the God of Christ, who adopts the peacemakers.
Glorious is our God, who lifts high the persecuted.
Wonderful is the God of Christ, who finds the lost.
Glorious is our God, who awakens the dead.

***HYMN OF PRAISE UMH #408 “The Gift of Love”**

Author: Hal Hopson (1972)

Publication Date: 1989

Copyright: © 1972 Hope Publishing Co.

Though I may speak with bravest fire,
and have the gift to all inspire,
and have not love, my words are vain,
as sounding brass, and hopeless gain.

2 Though I may give all I possess,
and striving so my love profess,
but not be given by love within,
the profit soon turns strangely thin.

3 Come, Spirit, come, our hearts control,
our spirits long to be made whole.
Let inward love guide every deed;
by this we worship, and are freed.

We Hear God's Word

Gospel Reading..... Matthew 5:1-12
New Revised Standard Version

The Beatitudes

5 When Jesus[a] saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. 2 And 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 the sake of righteousness, 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[b] on my account. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

The Word of God for the People of God, **Thanks be to God!**

Children's Sermon

FAITH HYMN FWS #2158 "Just a Closer Walk with Thee"

Author: Anon.

Copyright: Public Domain

**I I am weak, but thou art strong;
Jesus, keep me from all wrong;
I'll be satisfied as long
as I walk, let me walk close to thee.**

Refrain:

**Just a closer walk with thee,
grant it, Jesus, is my plea,
daily walking close to thee:
Let it be, dear Lord, let it be.**

**2 Through this world of toil and snares,
if I falter, Lord, who cares?
Who with me my burden shares?
None but Thee, dear Lord, none but thee. [Refrain]**

**3 When my feeble life is o'er,
time for me will be no more;
guide me gently, safely o'er
to thy shore, dear Lord, to thy shore. [Refrain]**

"Message"

PRAYING THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

(inspired by Matthew 5-7)

Lord and Creator,
let us embrace the costly blessings which you desire for us,
blessings that confound the wisdom and strength of this world.

Teach us to be your agents of preservation in a world touched by death,
and beacons of hope in a world shrouded in darkness.

Transform us into your image through the crucible of the cross,
writing your mandates upon our hearts, made pure by your perfect love.

Embolden us to be your ambassadors,

Living as representatives of your holy kingdom,
stirring in us your love for others,
especially for those who would seek to destroy us because of you.

Make us decrease so that you might increase,
as a watching world sees you, not us.

Daily we declare that your priorities are ours,

even before our own needs and desires.

Every moment we live, we live for your glory—
the glory of a loving Father and a just King.

Free us of any distraction, craving or anxiety
that would keep us from fully following you.

For we acknowledge that everything we could possibly need
is yours to give us.
Remind us of our sinful brokenness and your gift of grace
as we encounter brokenness in others.

You are the answer to our every question.
You are the treasure that we desperately seek,
and it is you who invite us into your salvation,
as prodigals returning to the Father's embrace.

Keep us upon your path of righteousness and justice,
bearing the good fruit of your Spirit,
for it is on you, Lord Jesus, that all hope is built,
For all of creation, now and forever more.— in the name of the servant Christ, who taught
us to pray...Our Father...

Offertory (UM Hymnal 95) Doxology (Wykoff only)

Offertory Prayer

God of all blessings, your beloved son teaches all we need to know to claim the life you've
hoped for us. Today we bring to you our gifts, which are the result of your blessings, help
us to remember who Jesus called truly blessed! We pray in the name of our teacher and
savior. Amen. (Matthew 5:1-12)

Departing Hymn UMH #145 "Morning Has Broken"

Author: Eleanor Farjeon (1931)

Publication Date: 1989

Copyright: Words by permission of David Higham Associates, Ltd.

**1 Morning has broken
like the first morning,
blackbird has spoken
like the first bird.
Praise for the singing!
Praise for the morning!
Praise for them, springing
fresh from the Word!**

**2 Sweet the rain's new fall
sunlit from heaven,
like the first dewfall
on the first grass.**

**Praise for the sweetness
of the wet garden,
sprung in completeness
where God's feet pass.**

**3 Mine is the sunlight!
Mine is the morning
born of the one light
Eden saw play!
Praise with elation,
praise every morning,
God's recreation
of the new day!**

Benediction

May the Source of life hold you in the faith;
the Word of life speak clearly in truth around you;
and Breath of life, of grace, of wisdom,
sing in your inmost being this day and all your days. Amen.

***POSTLUDE**