

Matthew 5:1-12
Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany
February 1, 2026

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

"He opened His mouth and taught them." The first phrase, "He opened His mouth" is meant to express his divine authority – what comes from that mouth is holy, the Word of God Himself. The second phrase, "He taught them" may seem less weighty, but it is equally important: part of Jesus being made known to the nations ("epiphany") is his teaching, Truth, being made known. Yes, he comes into the world to save sinners, but then what? What does daily life look like for those who are blessed to be beneficiaries of His cross? That *should* mean, "What does daily life look like for all men," for all mankind is beneficiary of His cross. But, many *refuse* the good news of their salvation... many *refuse* to repent, for they do not trust that the kingdom of heaven is at hand... and so, those many continue in the way of darkness, and the light of Christ that shines upon them actually exposes their darkness for what it is – the darkness of death, the path of condemnation.

But, His teaching is not in vain, for we can still ask, "What does daily life look like for those who believe on His name, who are

blessed beneficiaries of the Christ and His cross and rejoice in the folly of the preaching of the cross, for it is the wisdom and power of God?" Isn't that question (that question of what daily life looks like at the foot of the cross) sort of what the end of the Old Testament reading gets at, when Micah says, "He has told you, O man, what is *good* (Jesus says, only God is good, and the One whom He has sent... so, if God has said what is good, it can only come from one who, by grace, is attached to Him.)... He has told you... what is good; and what does the LORD require of you" (and *require*, there, doesn't mean an arbitrary legalistic demand, but 'what can he rightly expect and what does He seek as the natural fruit of those who belong to Him?')... "but that you do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with your God."

That's the life of the Christian, isn't it? That's the life of the blessed, isn't it? They're not blessed because they do these things... rather they live this way because they are blessed in Christ, and they can live daily life and view the world before them through the lens of that blessed status, that safety that is theirs in Christ Jesus.

So, what does daily life look like for those who walk humbly before God, those who know their need for the Christ and who know they are blessed to be beneficiaries of Christ – He who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life?

That He here teaches us the way of life in the light of the gospel should not surprise us, for the next verses after the

Beatitudes (verses in next Sunday's text) are "You are the salt of the earth...you are the light of the world." That we confess Christ before the world by being in the world but not of the world may seem daunting. So, first, Christ comforts and reassures us that all who hope in Him are truly blessed:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Now, who are these poor in spirit? Are they those who think of themselves as impoverished, those who feel they are the victims of society? No, that's not "the poor in spirit." Did we not hear just last week the summary preaching of Christ: "Repent, for *the kingdom of heaven* is at hand." If the kingdom of heaven is at hand and belongs to those who repent, then the poor in spirit (whose "is the kingdom of heaven") are those who repent, who recognize their spiritual poverty and who repent at the word of rescue and in joy that Christ is on the scene... *theirs* is the kingdom of heaven – even now! – for the kingdom of heaven is *at hand* in the person of Christ Jesus... yes, *these* are blessed; *you* are blessed – you live in the humble life of repentance and Christ's forgiveness.

And that present blessing of being rescued by Christ, rescued as you have despaired and repented of Self and hoped in Him, that present blessing carries you along in the Christian life of patience, cross-bearing, holy living as you anticipate that glorious Last Day when *all* of your inheritance will be revealed. That's where Jesus

turns next in six more beatitudes – all which He describes as being lived out now, with faith in a *future* result. For example:

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they *shall* be comforted.”

The future tense helps us properly understand who are those who mourn. If it were simply a matter of mourning over our own sins, the comfort could be immediate; the clear conscience should be yours instantly, yours this morning! – as soon as absolution is declared and forgiveness is shared and you receive that body and blood of Christ. But, that those who mourn *will* be comforted means our comfort comes in the future – namely, the last day, when the resurrection dawns... for it is only on that final dawn when the mourning over ‘sin-in-general’ will be quieted and all of sin’s devastation upon the world will be undone. Until then, you and I rightly mourn sin’s effect, rightly lament this world’s brokenness and not only what that means on a macro-level, but for each individual community and home and family and individual.

The wicked delight in sin, they play in and revel in sin, as if a harmless novelty; they disconnect it from death and even believe it to be their best life now. Or, they admit it’s no good... that it all ends in death... but then attempt to redefine death as actually being good, euthanasia, the good death, with a resulting “celebration of life”... just ignoring the reality of what sin and death is. Or – in the face of death’s reality – they do not mourn in *humility* before the sting of

death, but madly shake their fists in misplaced anger at the “unjust” God.

But, the poor in spirit, the humble who hope in Christ, recognize Sin’s full grip on this creation; they weep with Christ at the tomb of His friend Lazarus, at the tomb of our parents, our siblings, even at the loss of our little ones... and we live daily life with a sober-mindedness that *only* the resurrection will bring the comfort that is long promised. But, that sober-mindedness is matched with a quiet and resolute joy that – not *only*, but *truly*! – the resurrection will bring the comfort that is long promised.

In the same vein, “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” The meek know their lowliness before God, so that any daily bread we receive we know to be nothing but a gift from above. The proud and arrogant, who do not recognize the blessings of a quiet life in Christ, think all their success and wealth and fame is of their own doing, and they bite and devour anyone who stands between them and that which is supposedly theirs by right. They need to be seen; they need to be cheered; they need to be praised. But the wicked will perish; all they have built up will be brought by moth, rust, and decay to utter nothingness, and they themselves will return to the dust. But, on that Last Day, the meek, blessed with eternal life in Christ Jesus, will have a big wide-open earth, free of the wicked!, to inherit and claim as their own.

Nevertheless, that's not what the meek (not the 'artificially humble,' but truly humble in Christ Jesus), the godly, the faithful know as their heart's desire. The earth may be our inheritance, but we do not idolize it. Instead, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied." Notice, if this was a hungering and thirsting for the righteousness to cover *only* them, they would *already* be satisfied – for all who have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ and currently wear our justification by his righteousness.

But, *this particular* hungering and thirsting for righteousness of which Jesus speaks *will* be satisfied... in the future. In other words, it's not just a hungering and thirsting for our own benefit of Christ's righteousness (ours *now*), but for our entire *life* and *being* to be righteous, indeed our entire *world* to be righteous! What good is the earth, when it is still full of wickedness! What beauty can it truly display, when it is full of such ugly licentiousness, selfishness, and general disregard for the Ten Commandments? Those who hope in Christ hunger and thirst for His holy will over creation to shine brightly in the daily life of the whole world. And, one day, our hunger and thirst for the holy will of God over our entire being and the entire creation will be satisfied; and the glorious new creation will know nothing but holiness, perfection, Christian love, true unity, a countless multitude as one in worship... all focused on the Lamb in the midst of the throne, Christ our righteousness.

And, on that Last Day, Christ our righteousness will say to us, “Come, blessed by my Father, *inherit* all this, for I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, thirsty and you gave me something to drink.” And we will say, “When did we do such things?” And He will say, “When you did it to the least of my brothers, you did it to Me.” In other words, “Blessed are the *merciful*, for they ***shall receive mercy.***” Covered in the righteousness of Christ, our mercy toward one another, our love for one another, our desire to see each other in the eternal dwellings and point each other to the eternal dwellings, such focus of *daily* life and eager hope for *eternal* life will not be put to shame. Rather, those merciful to one another out of faith in Him will receive *by sight* exactly what we all pointed each other to *in faith* – His mercy and, therein, our full inheritance.

Likewise, the ‘pure in heart,’ those who – though they struggle with temptation and must constantly repent of sin and must resist constantly the temptation to believe they are ‘missing out’ by not giving into corruption – nevertheless, those whose hearts are not *led away* by materialistic idolatry and short-term fame and the wicked desires of the unbelieving world... those pure hearts *already* live blessed... blessed because we live with the certain result that we shall see God (is there any temptation worth idolizing so as to give up *that* opportunity, to see God face to face, even if it were only for a mere moment, let alone eternity!)... yes, we shall see God, just as

John boldly, defiantly encourages the children of God: “We shall be like Him, for we shall see him as He is.”

And when that day comes to see Him as He is, those of us who even now humbly point the whole world to the peace Christ gives, the peace the world *cannot* give – “Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give” – those of us who confess the true peace of Christ before all the world and thus are truly *peacemakers* (while all who point away from Christ bring nothing but evil and chaos and war and destruction upon the earth)... the *peacemakers* will, on that last day, be recognized by all for who they truly were all along. Where all the world denied Christ and lived to destroy others so as to advance the Self, we who desired *all* to share in Christ will be recognized as the true sons of God, brothers of Christ, heirs of the kingdom of heaven.

Until then, expect to be hated by the world... for the world does not love Christ... it’s not even ‘neutral’ on the matter: “If the world hates you, know that it hated me first,” He says. Thus, a world of wicked, evil, even just plain indifferent people will hate those who claim the exclusivity of Jesus – the *only* hope and Savior of the world. But, it’s no matter that they hate you, even that they might *persecute* you! You are already blessed; and you live all of daily life rich in that blessing because – even now – yours is the kingdom of heaven.

Notice: all throughout this text, the Epiphany theme continues: Jesus wants to make known to you not only His person, but His *promises*... not only your Savior's incarnation, but your salvation's inheritance. And, as He assures you of His promises and you live daily life blessed in them, you thereby make Christ known to the world. You confess Christ simply through the fact that you live daily life unflinching to the world's wickedness leading to destruction, but instead resolute in the quiet joy that you who belong to Christ and rejoice in Christ and confess Christ... you are *already* blessed, *daily* blessed – despite all the crosses you bear, even the ridicule to endure – you are daily blessed because you live each day already an heir of all things... a future recipient of all that, on that last day, will *be*... but even now, *is* the kingdom of heaven.

In the Name of the Father
And of the Son
And of the Holy Spirit.
+ AMEN +

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