

Lessons for Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany January 29, 2023

Psalm 15 ~ *David describes the behavior of a person who lives in the sanctuary of the Lord.*

Micah 6:1-8 ~ *God desires justice, mercy, and humility.*

1 Corinthians 1:18-31 ~ *The message of Christ crucified is the power of God for salvation.*

Matthew 5:1-12 ~ *Blessed are those who recognize their need for God's mercy.*

GATHERING THE TEXTS: God's Claim to Change

The one to whom you belong makes a difference. The Lord spoke to His people through Micah to remind them that He had brought them up out of Egypt, and to confront them with the challenge to live just, merciful, and humble lives. St. Paul reminded the Corinthians and us that we should remember what kind of people we were before God chose us, so that we can be proud of Christ Jesus, the One who has made us what we are. In the introduction to his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus turned the world upside down with His blessings for all those the world considers losers. God has claimed us to change us.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERVICE: Dear Father in heaven, through Christ my Savior, You have made me Your own. Remind me of the blessings You have given me through faith in Your promises and the power of Your Holy Spirit. Help me respond to Your gift of eternal life with the just and merciful deeds of a humble life in this world. Amen.

STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT: God has blessed us so abundantly with His grace that we need not hold anything back to enhance our opinion of ourselves. Indeed, He has shared His very life with us, so we can share humble, loving deeds and goods with others as we demonstrate God's much greater love.

OFFERING PRAYER: Your gifts to us, O Lord, have known no bound,
And in our greatest need, You rescued us!
Send us to those Your love has not yet found,
That they may know your ways are kind and just. Amen.

CONVICTION AND COMFORT: Our pride and self-satisfaction are the enemies of God's grace. When we refuse to see our sin and our need for a Savior, we stumble over a crucified King and put ourselves above the law. God has come to us in humbled, human form to share our sin and show us our shame. We are truly blessed when the conditions of our life make our need so obvious that it becomes unavoidable. Then we are ready recipients of God's mercy and eager to extend love and kindness to others.

Questions to Consider: If you can't see your guilt for your sins, how can you seek mercy?

- How did God place his claim on Israel?
- Why is God's claim recognized by those who are not influential or of noble birth?
- How are the Beatitudes a reflection of Micah 6:1-8?
- What is the surprise in the Beatitudes?

Bonus on next page: An example of a claim that makes a difference

The Stocking Cap

In the corner of a trunk I found it,
cradled up beside the family Bible
where you kept the names and dates
that told you who you were
long after you forgot just what they meant.

An old, blue, stocking cap!

The same warm feeling covered me
as on that day you pulled it down upon my head
and took me from the children's home,
the newest member of your family.

And now, because you are not there,
I keep it by the window where you used to sit,
to tell me who I am,
and to remind me who I was
before you found me.

*– Gilbert A. Franke
June 2, 2008*