

The Fourth Sunday of Epiphany - January 30th, 2011

READINGS & PSALM

Micah 6:1-8

Psalm 15

1 Corinthians 1:18-31

Matthew 5:1-12

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.

1 Corinthians 1 : 18-25

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.

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*

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

SEQUENCE 1

Thematic

Perfect Light of revelation,
as you shone in the life of Jesus,
whose epiphany we celebrate,
O 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.

Or

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.

Intercessory

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

Prayers of the People, 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,
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.

Or

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

Prayers of the People, 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.

Scripture

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.

SEQUENCE 2

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.

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.**

SEQUENCE 3

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 Zimbabwe, 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.**

SERMON STARTERS

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 problem-solving, forgiving sins, and moving on, moving on "to beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks" (4:3). *By John Gibbs*

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 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 & 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*

WEB SOURCES

Sermons That Work - The Episcopal Church site

http://www.episcopalchurch.org/sermons_that_work_7682_ENG_HTML.htm

Lectionary Org. - Matthew 5, 1 - 12

http://www.lectionary.org/Sermons/Dono/Matt/05.01-12_HappyWhen.htm