

Journey through Lent – Week 4

Phase 1: Meditation on Baptism and the Love of God (10 minutes)

Prepare by opening the hymnal (LSB) to #451. PC will lead.



Phase 2: Intercession in and with Christ

One way to talk about what Christ does for us on the Cross is that it is an act of “intercession,” i.e. “moving between” humanity and God, so as to plead for humanity to God. Christ continues even now to intercede for us with the Father through prayer (Rom 8:34, Heb 7:25, 1 Jn 2:1). So too we now intercede for each other in conformity to Christ and as part of the Lenten discipline of prayer.

We now have a special opportunity to do so through our Lenten Prayer Sheet (distributed, or [linked here](#)). We encourage you to pray for a section of these prayers, or all of them, each day as we move toward Good Friday and Easter. This is also a good opportunity to see where people with whom you may have lost touch during the COVID cloud “are at.”

Phase 3: Holy Conversation – Where is Jesus Going?

Previously: Israel, the Desert of Temptation, Bethlehem/Nazareth (the king “on the margins”)

Monday: Mt 5:1 “Seeing the crowds, [Jesus] *went up on the mountain*, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying...”

What kind of place is Jesus “coming to” today? What person is he fulfilling and exceeding?

“Blessed [makarios]”: “Happy, fortunate, flourishing”

In the Old Testament: the authoritative Greek translation of the Hebrew OT (the Septuagint) uses *makarios* to translate the Hebrew *ashrê*. *Ashrê* is used 44 times throughout the OT; a large proportion of these appear in the Wisdom books, with Psalms (26) and Proverbs (8) leading the count. Indeed, *Ashrê* launches the entire Psalter in Psalm 1 and is also prominent in Psalm 2. It is also particularly important to Isaiah.

- **Psalm 1:1-3:** “**Blessed** 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 Torah of the Lord, and on his Torah he meditates day and night.”
- **Psalm 2:12:** “Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. **Blessed** are all who take refuge in him.”
- **Proverbs 3:13-18:** “**Blessed** is the one who finds Wisdom, and the one who gets understanding, for the gain from her [i.e. Wisdom] is better than gain from silver and her profit better than gold. She is more precious than jewels, and nothing you desire can compare with her. Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her; those who hold her fast are called **blessed**.”

- **Proverbs 14:21:** “Whoever despises his neighbor is a sinner, but **blessed** is he who is generous to the poor.”
- **Isaiah 30:18:** “Therefore the LORD waits to be gracious to you, and therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you. For the LORD is a God of justice; **blessed** are all those who wait for him.”

How do these OT uses help *ground* our understanding of what it means to be “blessed”?
[take each passage one by one and paraphrase: who is blessed here?]

- Ps 1 -
- Ps 2 -
- Prv 3 -
- Prv 14 -
- Isa 30 -

What does Jesus’ invocation of the Wisdom and Prophetic traditions on “blessing” add to our understanding of who he is and what he is doing in the Beatitudes?

In the first century Greco-Roman world, there were 3 common, almost exclusive uses of makarios: the “blessed gods,” the “blessed dead,” the “blessed elite/wealthy.” In each case, a group is identified that is in some way BEYOND the cares and pains of common, everyday life.

Consider the first four beatitudes (Mt 5:3-6):

- Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.
- Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.
- Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

How does Jesus’s definition compare to the common cultural definition?

How do the people to whom Jesus “comes” here with blessing compare to those to whom he came last week?

Key note: the beatitudes are indicative descriptions, not imperative commands for an action.

Connection: Good Friday – and our Discipleship

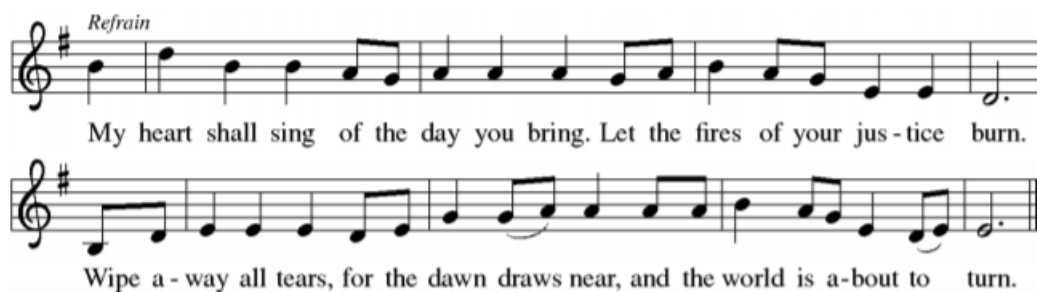
1 Cor 1:21-31: “²¹For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. ²²For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, ²³but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, ²⁴but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

²⁶For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. ²⁷But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ²⁸God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, ²⁹so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. ³⁰And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, ³¹so that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.”

How is the Cross connected to the Wisdom Christ preaches in the Beatitudes?**Phase 4: Practical Worship - Hymn of the Day: “Canticle of the Turning”**

The verses of the Canticle render Mary’s Magnificat, which describes how the world “turns” (changes) through God’s kingdom come, into modern language. Here is the refrain:

Refrain



My heart shall sing of the day you bring. Let the fires of your jus - tice burn.

Wipe a - way all tears, for the dawn draws near, and the world is a - bout to turn.

What would it mean to LIVE IN the anticipation that “the world is about to turn”? How does this influence the way we “inhabit” the beatitudes?