



Church At Home
St. Timothy's Lutheran Church – Pembroke, Ontario
Fourth Sunday after Epiphany February 1, 2026

Prayer of the Day

Holy God, you confound the world's wisdom in giving your kingdom to the lowly and the pure in heart. Give us such a hunger and thirst for justice, and perseverance in striving for peace, that in our words and deeds the world may see the life of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

The Holy Gospel: Matthew 5:1-12

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. "Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. "Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Homily

I greet you in the name of Jesus, the Light of the World. Amen.

This writing from the fifth chapter of Matthew is one of the best known passages of scripture. We have spent time memorizing these words in Sunday School. Maybe you received a gold star. We may have discussed the verses in an Adult Ed class and we have certainly heard many sermons on the Beatitudes. This is one of the most important passages in the book of Matthew and throughout this year we will return to it time and time again. The Sermon on the Mount will be our focus over the next four weeks leading up to the Transfiguration of Our Lord.

The Sermon on the Mount inaugurates Jesus' public ministry and the first word out of his mouth to the disciples is blessed. Jesus repeats this word throughout his first sermon. In using the word blessed, Jesus reaches back to the Old Testament stories of blessing in creation and in the call of Abraham found in Genesis 12 "I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing." At the same time, he reaches forward to his final sermon and the last words of his public ministry.

It is not surprising that Jesus begins his ministry with blessings. Yet, there is something both holy and terrifying about Jesus' blessings. Those he blesses are not sought after individuals. They would have preferred to be "healthy, wealthy, and wise. But in fact, they were the sick,

those who were afflicted with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics and paralytics. Their lives were filled with sorrow and oppression, hunger and thirst, and persecution.

There are times when I hear the Beatitudes and possibly you hear it this way too, in a way not to hear Jesus as stating the terms under which I might be blessed. For instance, when I hear, “Blessed are the pure in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven,” I tend to think, “Am I pure enough in spirit?” Likewise, when I hear “blessed are the peacemakers....”, I think, “Yes, I really should be more committed to making peace.” At least with “blessed with those who mourn, for they will be comforted,” I have the assurance of knowing that on those occasions when I am mourning, I will be comforted. But the truth is, I don’t want to mourn and so hearing this Beatitude doesn’t make me more eager for more mourning.

So, what is a blessing? Have you ever sat back and thought about that question for a moment?

In the Middle Ages when someone sneezed you said, “God bless you” fearing that they may have the plague. It is one of those words that we have so thoroughly taken into our religious vocabulary that I think it’s one we take for granted. It can mean happy, fortunate, well off and more. If we think of a meaning in more traditional terms, blessing can indicate special favor, unique standing, permission, empowerment, and more. So maybe the question isn’t what it means, but rather what it feels like. What does it feel like when you’re blessed?

Blessing is something that can’t be pursued, but can only be received as a gift.

Reading the Beatitudes over again, I wonder whether our difficulty with them doesn’t stem from we are less eager to be blessed than God is to bless us. Gifts are hard to receive – except for birthday and Christmas presents. But generally, we have difficulties receiving gifts. So being blessed, to accept a blessing is not in our comfort zone. It may be that our picture of God is distorted, that we can only imagine God as a stern, demanding law-giver, and so it seems out of character for God to bless without requirements.

And then again maybe, just maybe we know ourselves all too well to feel worthy of God’s gifts and grace. We are intimately familiar with our faults and limitations, our insecurities and failures. Knowing ourselves this well – and knowing that God knows us even better! – we may find it hard to believe God loves unconditionally. But yet, we do know we are a child of God and loved unconditionally and therefore we are blessed unconditionally.

We are blessed by God and we are a blessing to others – yes to others. Even with all our faults. Let’s not kid ourselves; we all have faults.

We are very quick to criticize. Our tongues can be sharp. We say things that unknowingly hurt others. Yet God still blesses us. And in our brokenness, we too can be a blessing to others, even those who hurt us and this is forgiveness.

My friends in Christ. “God bless you” may have once been said to ward off fear of evil, disease, and death. Today may we reclaim these powerful words to signify not fear but joy, not disease but delight, not death but God’s new life. And in doing so may we reclaim the Beatitudes as an insight to our God; a God who delights to create, bless, redeem and the reminder that we are God’s own beloved and blessed children.

So, this morning I would invite you to hear and receiving God's blessings. Turn to your neighbour, beside you, in front of you, behind you and bless them by saying, "God Bless you."

Blessed are you!

Amen.

Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Benediction

The Lord bless you and keep you,
The Lord's face shine upon you and be gracious unto you,
The Lord look upon you with favour and give you (+) peace. Amen.

Prayers used by permission by Augsburg Fortress – Sundays and Seasons

STTLC Communiqué

In Our Prayers Today.....Nancy Briscoe, Mike Harrington, Lila Martinat, Irlavere Tubbe, Bobby Keuhl, Adele Krieger, Tracy Schori and Christa Reitlingshoefer.

Shrove Tuesday February 17 – Pancake Supper – 4 to 6:30 pm.

Mark your calendar. Supper to include: pancakes, maple syrup, sausage, baked beans, fruit and beverages. Adults \$10, Children 10 to 6 years, \$5 and children under 5 years eat free!

