

Gospel and Sermon Transcript -4th Sunday After Epiphany - February 1, 2026

The Holy Gospel according to Matthew, the fifth chapter.

>> 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.

And blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

And blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

And blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

And blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when people will 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."

The Gospel of our Lord.

The Sermon

As I said, it's good to be here.

Tomorrow is an important day for a lot of us people
who are getting a little tired of all that white stuff flying around.
And I do hope the groundhog does not see its shadow and spring comes early.
I still remember one Sunday school child who was asked,
"Well, what is Groundhog Day?" to which replied,
"That's when Jesus pops his head out of the ground
and sees if it's safe to come out."

[Laughs]

You know, when I read the Holy Scriptures,
and when I hear them and I listen to them within our worship,
or sometimes, you know, at home reading,
sometimes there's a verse or a word that remains with me.
And in preparing for today, the second reading today from the Apostle Paul,
"God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong."
It brings back memories of my son Matthew,
and he was a youngster in public school.
Matthew came home, and he was complaining of an older boy wanting to pick a
fight with him.
And apparently this lad had been picking up on younger opponents,
hoping to show others how tough he was.
My son replied that he didn't want to fight, and he left it at that.
He also said, "Dad, I really wouldn't have had any problem taking this guy,

but I have been taught that fighting is not right."

Now, if my son is continually going to be taunted and pushed into a corner,
that's another matter.

But, you know, maybe as a parent,

I should have given my son a few tips on how to take down your opponent
and throw in a few licks.

High school days, I played on various teams,

hockey, lacrosse, wrestling,

and it taught me a few lessons when I got involved in a few scraps.

My parents never knew that I broke my nose. Ouch!

And I fixed it myself due to a slight misunderstanding in the lacrosse game,
and I did not want my parents to know what happened.

You know, I could have taught that schoolyard bullion lesson
and show who the boss is.

That should have been and is how the world wants our children to behave.

But, you know, instead I was proud to see if my son chose the opposite.

He chose to pursue peace rather than strength and power.

What the Apostle Paul said needs to be heard again for our world today.

God chooses the exact opposite of what the world wants.

God chooses the weak to shame the strong,

the foolish to shame the wise.

The people, you know, who started the churches in Corinth,

they were not all that gifted,

powerful or rich during the Apostles' time of Paul on earth.

The early followers of Christ, they suffered punishment and persecution.

And when you think about it, who in their right mind would want to join

and be a part of a group like that that would face death and imprisonment?

I don't think I would.

And yet it's sad to say that in many parts of our world,

Christianity is facing great persecution.

While here at home, we face a declining membership rather than persecution.

Jesus, within our hearing of the Gospel for today,

He went up the mountain to escape the crowds that He was dealing with,

healing all their various illnesses.

He went up the mountain for a while and talked with His disciples.

And it was there that He gave His famous sermon on the mount,

otherwise known as the Beatitudes.

And the words spoken were not meant just for His disciples to hear,

but for the people who followed Him and for our present generation today.

We still have people today, just like in the time of Christ,

who experienced persecution and suffering,

the lame, the sick, deaf, dumb, blind, lonely, the widows, the poor and homeless,

the grieving, the helpless, the weak, the depressed,

all who were in need of hope and comfort.

The words spoken by Christ are not the lofty words of empty promises
from perhaps a well-known politician or world leader.

And they are not the words spoken from a self-made billionaire
to which many adore and they want to be just like that.

And they are not the words spoken from well-known TV evangelists
who, I'm sorry to say, they only want your money,
but they would never ever visit you in the hospital or bury you dead.

What Jesus said was the exact opposite of what the world would say and wants.
Jesus' words to His disciples and to us today,
they are the people and they are true.

We are a blessed people and loved by a God who cares
and does not abandon what God has created, you and I.

We are being told to hold on to all those nice virtues
to which the world wants to forget and ignore.

Be kind and merciful, not hateful in me.

Hunger for righteousness and not selfishness.

Be meek and mild and not strong and dominating.

Cry and be merciful and not proud and arrogant.

Be pure in heart rather than devious as a snake.

This is what Jesus said to the disciples and what He says to you and I.

Blessed are you for being a peacemaker rather than an agitator.

These are hard words to live by,

especially when we live in a society built on wealth, power and success.

Everyone and I include myself.

We all want to be healthy, successful and rich.

And there is nothing wrong in wanting those things in life.

But when these desires invade our desire to love God and to love our neighbor,
maybe the world needs to rehear the words of Christ.

Jesus' sermon on the Mount is not just a prescription on how to live our lives,
but there is also a reflection on how we may find ourselves at various times within
our life.

And when we do find ourselves being the opposite of what the society of the world
says we should be,

Jesus says we are blessed by God.

God calls us to do the opposite of what the world wants.

God's Holy Spirit is always at work within us.

It is moving within all faith communities to be at peace with one another.

We are blessed by God and we in turn bless God for who we are and also to share
with what we have.

I leave the last words to Micah in the first reading.

Micah, he was just a farmer, a farmer who did not trust what you might call the city
slickers,

who took advantage of the poor and helpless.

What Micah said, "I wish present-day world leaders, you know who I'm talking
about, would take heart and listen."

He has told you, "O mortal, what is good? And what does the Lord require of you?

But to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God. Amen."

Amen.