

Sunday, January 29, 2023 Epiphany 4 *“Reflecting Christ’s Light”*

Micah 6:1-9 and Matthew 5:1-12

It certainly is great to be able to gather to worship God both in person and online today. Just think about this for a moment- we are free to worship God in ways that generations before could not. IT was something odd when revivalist preachers pitched a tent and people came to hear the Good News. It was also something different when Evangelists like Billy Graham spoke on the radio and eventually television. Now one can hear the message of Jesus broadcast through television networks dedicated to this purpose or like what we are doing right now by the wonders of technology. Live and right in this moment to a viewer’s capability to watch at any time through computers. But what is amazing is that the message we are sharing in this moment of history is the same as was shared by a person who set his thoughts which were received as prophecy. This message is also by a man who attracted thousands to a hillside to hear him speak and he focused on what means to be blessed and happy if one follows his teachings and lives reflecting His light.

But what does “reflecting Christ’s light’ really mean and what are we to do and how are we to share of ourselves? And what is the difference between requirements and reflections?

In our reading from Micah 6 the prophet is reminding the community of the covenant obligations they have made with God throughout their history. Micah is also reminding them of their story as God entered and supported them. God moved them from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the Promised Land. God’s only request was to live according to his way. HE did not want possessions or chattel or commercial products, but to perform actions which made a difference in people’s lives. Doing justice, loving kindness and walking humbly with God. Justice—what is right and fair according to law and faith. They are to be loving and kind, caring for the people with whom they interact and mingle as they live on the land God set aside for them. They are to do this humbly that is with humility before God.

Humility reconciles us to God. Because of humility, we see that we cannot save ourselves in our own strength, perfection, or good works. We need humility to receive

God's saving grace and mercy. As we assess ourselves in light of one's sinfulness or being human we need to realize that what we are doing is figuring how we relate to God and how we relate to others.

Humility means assessing oneself in light of one's sinfulness or humanness. This word also translates as gentleness, which means acting in a manner of kindness and even-temperedness. The first definition helps us relate to God and the second helps us relate to others. Being humble means remembering how God redeemed us and made us whole and right because of Jesus. Micah was teaching about this need to seek God's love and attention hundreds of years before Jesus was born but people just did not get it or do it. From time to time people thought they could do what God could do until the time came when God said no- I'm sending Jesus to do what you cannot. Believe in him, his teachings his love and know that in his death there is resurrection with new life and there is hope.

We need to be humble enough to ask Jesus for this precious gift. And then do what He says: declare the praises of his kingdom, tell others about the great love of the God who sent Jesus to die and rise again so that we might have everlasting life. We are called to follow Jesus' teachings and if we do we will be happy and blessed not only as we live here on Earth, but we will live eternally with God.

So on a scale of 1-5 how are you doing with what God requires of you? We cannot know for sure but all we can do is seek God's kingdom and know that Christ is with us always. WE are called to reflect the light of Jesus. We cannot be the light—there is only one Jesus the Christ; so as we strive to fulfil God's call, we must only reflect his light and this means getting the right angle.

Just think about the job of a reflector by a driveway. It limits how far one may plough the snow or put salt in these winter months. But there are other items that have reflectors as well. What are their purpose? On cars reflectors aid visibility of a vehicle driving or parked on the road as light shining on the coloured parts bounces back so that the person driving can see what is there. Safety reflectors on bicycles enable the bicyclist pedals, wheels and back of the bike to be seen. I also like the idea that pet owners now put vests on their dark coloured dogs so that they may be seen at night as

they go for a walk. Reflectors don't keep the light within it like a solar panel keeps the light to create energy, but the reflector just enables the light to bounce back allowing the viewer to see what needs to be seen.

Jesus saw the crowds one day and so he went up on the mountain and then sat down. His disciples came to him. Then he began to speak and teach. This begins his Sermon on the Mount with this passage from Matthew 5 focusing on what has become known as the Beatitudes. Named from the initial words (beati sunt, "blessed are") they are described as those who have certain qualities or experiences of those who belong to the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus describes those whom he calls as being blessed. We might understand these as signs for those who have been brought low and their life has been or seems to have been overwhelmed and unfair. Yet Jesus says they are blessed because they reflect the covenant they made with God and how they live their lives. Those who are blessed may not fully realize the extent of their service of God but Jesus does. For when we think of one who has been blessed they truly reflect Christ's light. They live out their faith following, serving and walking in Jesus' way.

Blessed are the poor in spirit—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.

Are you blessed by God? Are you reflecting Christ's light?

One Sunday as they drove home from church, a little girl turned to her mother and said, "Mommy, there's something about what the minister said that I don't understand." The mother said, "Oh? What is it?" The little girl replied, "Well, he said that God is bigger than we are. He said God is so big that He could hold the whole world in His hand. Is that true?" The mother replied, "Yes, that's true, honey." "But Mommy, he also said that God comes to live inside of us when we believe in Jesus as our Savior. Is that true, too?" Again, the mother assured the little girl that what the pastor had said was true. With a puzzled look on her face the little girl then asked, "If God is bigger than us and He lives in us, wouldn't He show through?" That is what the beatitudes are about – God showing through you. Are you reflecting Christ's light?

Let us pray:

God of grace and love, show through us because you live in our hearts. Help us to reflect Jesus in all ways- Enable us to think of others and their needs and situations; help us to be kind; and to come before you humbly and with an open heart to receive you. Bless us we pray as we reflect the Light of Christ in our lives.

We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.