



FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

SUNDAY, JANUARY 28–FEBRUARY 3 (if before Transfiguration)

LECTIONARY 4

FIRST READING: Micah 6:1-8

A reading from Micah.

¹Hear what the LORD says:

Rise, plead your case before the mountains,
and let the hills hear your voice.

²Hear, you mountains, the case of the LORD,
and you enduring foundations of the earth,
for the LORD has a case against his people,
and he will contend with Israel.

³“O my people, what have I done to you?
In what have I wearied you? Answer me!

⁴For I brought you up from the land of Egypt
and redeemed you from the house of slavery,
and I sent before you Moses,
Aaron, and Miriam.

⁵O my people, remember now what King Balak of Moab devised,
what Balaam son of Beor answered him,
and what happened from Shittim to Gilgal,
that you may know the saving acts of the LORD.”

⁶“With what shall I come before the LORD
and bow myself before God on high?
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,
with calves a year old?

⁷Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams,
with ten thousands of rivers of oil?
Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression,
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?”

⁸He 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?

Word of God, word of life.

or

The word of the Lord.

FIRST READING Micah = MY-kuh Balak = BAY-lak Moab = MO-ab Balaam = BAY-lum
Beor = BEE-or Shittim = Shih-TEEM Gilgal = GIL-gol

The “voice” of the reading changes four times in eight verses: the voice of the prophet (verses 1-2); the voice of God (verses 3-5); the voice of the people (verses 6-7); the voice of the prophet again (verse 8). Use a substantial pause and variation in tone and volume at each change to help the assembly differentiate between them. Finally, the reading is not “ready” until all seven of the proper nouns whose pronunciations precede these suggestions come trippingly off the tongue of the lector.

PSALMODY: Psalm 15

SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 1:18-31

A reading from First Corinthians.

¹⁸The message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing,
but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

¹⁹For it is written,

“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,
and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.”

²⁰Where is the one who is wise?

Where is the scholar?

Where is the debater of this age?

Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?

²¹For since, in the wisdom of God,
the world did not know God through wisdom,
God decided, through the foolishness of the proclamation,
to save those who believe.

²²For Jews ask for signs and Greeks desire wisdom,

²³but we proclaim Christ crucified,

a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to gentiles,

²⁴but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks,
Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

²⁵For God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom,
and God’s weakness is stronger than human strength.

²⁶Consider your own call, brothers and sisters:
not many of you were wise by human 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, things that are not,
to abolish things that are,

²⁹so that no one might boast in the presence of God.

SECOND READING

This is the central argument of the Christian faith. It is the reader’s job to make it a persuasive argument. Bring all the energy and conviction you can muster to this reading. Take plenty of time. Consider reading half as fast as you may be inclined to read. The assembly will need time to follow the argument.

³⁰In contrast, God is why you are in Christ Jesus,
who became for us wisdom from God,
and righteousness and sanctification and redemption,
³¹in order that, as it is written,
“Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.”

Word of God, word of life. *or* The word of the Lord.

GOSPEL: Matthew 5:1-12

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

¹When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain,
and after he sat down, his disciples came to him.

²And he began to speak and taught them, saying:

³“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

⁵Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

⁶Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.

⁷Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

⁸Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

⁹Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

¹⁰Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹“Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you
and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

¹²Rejoice 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 the Lord.

GOSPEL

It may be possible to bring the assembly to the mountain of Matthew 5 by allowing each “Blessed are” to hang in the air a bit once it has been voiced. Give the hearer a sense of our Lord’s “thinking up” the beatitudes rather than “reading” them. A reading textured with thoughtful pauses will help the people in the pew to hear them as for the first time.