



DIOCESE OF HAMILTON

700 King Street West, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada L8P 1C7

Fourth Sunday of Ordinary Time Children's Liturgy of the Word

The readings for the Fourth Sunday of Ordinary Time in Year A emphasize God's preferential option for the humble, lowly, and persecuted, contrasting worldly standards of power and wisdom. They promise salvation, justice, and the kingdom of heaven to those who embrace poverty of spirit, meekness, and righteousness amid weakness and opposition.

God calls the humble to seek righteousness and refuge in Him, promising to people who live truthfully and without fear. This foreshadows eschatological restoration, in which pride is removed, and the faithful dwell securely.

St. Paul reminds the Corinthians that God deliberately chooses the foolish, weak, lowly, and despised to shame the wise, powerful, and noble, ensuring that there is no boasting except in the Lord. Christ is our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

Jesus proclaims true happiness in countercultural virtues: poverty of spirit, mourning, meekness, hunger for righteousness, mercy, purity of heart, peacemaking, and enduring persecution for justice. Their reward is the kingdom, comfort, inheritance of the earth, and great heavenly recompense.

Across the readings, humility triumphs over pride; God inverts human hierarchies, empowering the marginalized as His remnant. The Beatitudes fulfill Zephaniah's promise and Paul's paradox, calling us to live as "children of God" through righteousness amid trials. This invites reflection on embracing weakness as a means to divine strength.

Background

Zephaniah 2:3; 3:12-13 God exhorts the humble of the land to seek righteousness, humility, and refuge in Him before the day of the Lord's anger. He promises to spare a faithful remnant in Israel—lowly and poor—who trust in the Lord, speak truth, and live without violence or deceit, allowing them to dwell securely like sheep at pasture, free from fear. This pericope draws from Zephaniah's prophecy amid Judah's impending judgment for idolatry and injustice (circa 630-620 BC). The call to "seek the Lord" echoes prophetic themes of repentance, targeting the "humble of the land" as those already disposed to covenant fidelity.

Psalms 146 is a Hallelujah psalm that contrasts trust in God with the fleeting power of human princes, emphasizing God's faithfulness. It highlights God's justice for society's vulnerable—oppressed, hungry, prisoners, blind, bowed down, aliens, orphans, widows—as acts of royal compassion.

1 Corinthians 1:26-31 Paul addresses Corinthian divisions over wisdom, applying the cross's scandal as the solution. The "foolish/weak/lowly" echo God's ironic election, ensuring grace-dependence. It critiques elitism, affirming divine reversal for the Church's unity.

Matthew 5:1-12a The Beatitudes form the opening of the Sermon on the Mount, portraying Jesus Christ as the new Moses on the mountain, teaching disciples amid crowds. They depict Christ's countenance and charity, expressing the vocation of the faithful to his Passion and Resurrection, illuminating Christian life with paradoxical promises of the Kingdom. As the heart of Jesus' preaching, they fulfill Abrahamic promises, ordering them to heaven rather than earthly territory, responding to humanity's desire for happiness placed by God.

In summary, the Beatitudes blueprint for kingdom blessedness: humble virtues, empowered by the Spirit's gifts, yield divine sonship and vision amid the reversal of worldly values.

The Liturgy

Procession from the main Church

After the opening prayer, when all are seated, the leaders come forward and stand facing the altar.

Priest: (in these or similar words)

Dear children, Jesus calls you to follow Him. Go with your leaders to listen to God's Word and learn how to shine His light. Go in peace.

Once most of the children have formed a procession, the leader with the book proceeds to the celebration site. The second leader usually walks behind the children. Upon arrival at the CLoW room, the leader places the book on the prepared table.

Welcome.

The leaders assist the children in sitting and preparing. **Begin with the Sign of the Cross.** Help the children think and connect their actions as they touch their foreheads, shoulders, and stomachs. The leader may offer the following prayer, in these or similar words.

Dear Jesus, open our hearts to Your words today. Help us be humble and kind, like You teach in the Beatitudes. Amen.

Let us begin.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Amen.

Invite the children to listen to the readings. Proclaiming all the readings is unnecessary; however, the Gospel is required.

READINGS

FIRST READING

Zephaniah 2.3; 3.12-13

A reading from the book of the prophet Zephaniah. ¹

Seek the Lord, all you humble of the land,
who do his commands;
seek righteousness, ² seek humility; ³
perhaps you may be hidden on the day of the Lord's wrath.
For I will leave in the midst of you
a people humble and lowly.
They shall seek refuge in the name of the Lord—
the remnant of Israel; ⁴
they shall do no wrong and utter no lies,
nor shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouths.
Then they will pasture and lie down,
and no one shall make them afraid.

The word of the Lord.

A period of silence is observed after the reading.

¹Zephaniah was a seventh-century prophet from Judah who authored the biblical book bearing his name. The son of Cushi, his recorded prophecies appear in the book of Zephaniah. He descended from Hezekiah, possibly the Judahite king, and ministered during Josiah's reign.

²Justice, holiness. The righteousness of God is the essential perfection of his nature; sometimes it is put for his justice. The righteousness of Christ denotes, not only his absolute perfection, but is taken for his perfect obedience unto death, and his suffering the penalty of the law in our stead. Richard Watson, "Righteousness," in A Biblical and Theological Dictionary (New York: Lane & Scott, 1851), 823.

³Humility is a fundamental virtue that emphasizes recognizing all good things as gifts from God, fostering a deep dependence on Him. Both Hebrew and Christian Scriptures highlight this theme, encouraging individuals to praise and thank God for His generosity.

⁴A portion of people left after a disaster, especially a disaster identified with divine judgment. Especially in the Prophets, this term describes those who remain faithful to God despite suffering and who ultimately experience restoration.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Psalm 27.1, 4, 13-14

R. Blessed are the poor in spirit;
the kingdom of heaven is theirs!

It is the Lord who keeps faith forever,
who executes justice for the oppressed;
who gives food to the hungry.

The Lord sets the prisoners free. **R.**

The Lord opens the eyes of the blind
and lifts up those who are bowed down;
the Lord loves the righteous
and watches over the strangers. **R.**

The Lord upholds the orphan and the widow,
but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.

The Lord will reign forever,
your God, O Zion, for all generations. **R.**

SECOND READING

1 Corinthians 1.26-31

A reading from the first letter of Paul to the Corinthians.

Consider 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.

But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise;

God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong;

God chose what is low and despised in the world,

things that are not,

to reduce to nothing things that are,

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

God is the source of your life in Christ Jesus,

who became for us wisdom from God,

and righteousness and sanctification ⁵ and redemption, ⁶

in order that, as it is written,

"Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

The word of the Lord.

A period of silence is observed after the reading.

⁵ Term meaning being made holy, or purified, it is used broadly of the whole Christian experience.

⁶ The act of buying back or rescuing something or someone that was lost, enslaved, or in a state of bondage.

GOSPEL

Matthew 5.1-12a

A reading from the holy gospel according to Matthew.

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 he 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."

The gospel of the Lord.

REIMAGINED READINGS FOR CHILDREN

The reimagined readings below are intended for use after the children have heard the original reading. The intent is to allow the children to hear the original reading and help them better understand it (not replace it).

Read at a minimum, the Gospel, which has the highest priority, and then ask the children to sit down. You can then read the reimagined reading. Leaders may not have time to read all of the reading. If time permits, after the Gospel, proclaim the Psalm, and then the first reading, if time permits.

Reimagined readers must always remain faithful to the original Scripture's intent, making it age-appropriate for children to understand.

FIRST READING

God says:

Come to me, all you who are humble and gentle.

I will keep you safe like a shepherd keeps sheep.

You will tell the truth, be kind, and no one will scare you anymore.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Leader: God helps everyone who needs Him!

R:/ All: God helps everyone who needs Him! (Repeat twice.)

Leader: The Lord frees prisoners and feeds the hungry. R:/

Leader: He lifts up those who are sad and loves those who do good. R:/

Leader: He cares for strangers, orphans, and widows. R:/

Leader: God is King forever! R:/

R:/ All: God helps everyone who needs Him!

SECOND READING

Paul says,

"God didn't pick the super-smart or strong people.

He picked the simple, the little ones—to show His power!

Don't brag about yourself.

Brag about Jesus, who makes us wise and good."

GOSPEL

Jesus sat on a hill and said to His friends:

Blessed are you who know you need God—the kingdom of heaven is yours!

Blessed are you who are sad for wrong things—you will laugh with joy!

Blessed are the gentle—you will get the whole world!

Blessed are you who want to do right—you will be full!

Blessed are the kind—you will get kindness!

Blessed are the pure-hearted—you will see God!

Blessed are peacemakers—you are God's children!

Blessed are you when others are mean because you love Me—the kingdom is yours, and heaven has big rewards!

Reflection

The leader may offer this reflection in these or similar words. Remember the amount of time available to return to the main assembly. The leader may wish to reduce the number of questions. An excellent place to begin is the question:

What did you hear? Allow children to respond.

Isn't it great to be with Jesus today? Imagine Jesus sitting on a big hill, looking at His friends—you and me—and saying, "You are blessed! You're super happy with God!" That's our story today. God picks the little, humble ones like us, not the big show-offs. Let's listen closely—He has a happy list just for you!

Have you ever been scared?

God tells a prophet: Be humble like quiet sheep, and I'll keep you safe forever. No more being scared! Then a song sings: God lifts up sad kids, feeds hungry tummies, frees those who feel stuck, and loves kind hearts.

Who does God help most?

Who feels small sometimes? Yes, you! God says, "That's me picking you!" Saint Paul whispers to friends: God chooses kids who aren't the strongest or smartest to show His immense power.

And Jesus? On that hill, He gives eight happy ways:

Happy if you trust God more than toys (poor in spirit—kingdom yours!).

Happy if sorry for oopsies.

Happy gentle ones.

What's one happy way you know?

Tell your neighbour! Happy, kind, pure hearts, peace-makers are God's children, even if someone teases you for Jesus.

Thumbs up if you've been kind this week!

So, kids, try this week: Pick one happy way—like being a peacemaker at recess. Say sorry quickly, help a sad friend.

Promise? Nod your heads! God boasts about you!

Thank You, Jesus, for picking our humble hearts. Make us Your blessed children!

Following the reflection, the prayer leader invites everyone to stand to profess their faith. Recite the Creed or use the sample below to ask the children to respond.

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The Creed

Depending on the time, a simple profession of faith may be made (see below).

Leader: Do you believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth?

All: I believe.

Leader: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, who gave his life for us?

All: I believe.

Leader: Do you believe in the Holy Spirit who lives in our hearts and gives us everlasting life?

All: I believe.

Leader: This is our faith. This is the faith of the Church. We are proud to profess it.

Prayer of the Faithful

Leaders may begin the intercessions by announcing the needs they know. The leader may need to repeat and paraphrase the petition, concluding it with the cue for the response: 'We pray.' All respond to each petition by saying, "Lord, hear our prayer." Sample intercessions are below.

The intercessions are said. The Leader introduces them, and an assistant announces them.

The leader says:

Let us pray to God, our loving Father, who hears our prayers. After each intercession, we all say, 'Lord, hear our prayer.'

R: Lord, hear our prayer.

Assistant:

For the Church, that we may follow Jesus by being kind, gentle, and loving to everyone we meet. We pray to the Lord. R:

Assistant:

For our families, that our homes may be places of love, forgiveness and peace. We pray to the Lord. R:

Assistant:

For children everywhere, especially those who are sad, hungry, or lonely, that God will protect them and send people to help them. We pray to the Lord. R:

Assistant:

For ourselves, that this week we may choose one kind thing to do each day. We pray to the Lord. R:

Assistant:

In the quiet of our hearts, we offer our own prayers... [pause]. We pray: Come, Lord Jesus. R:

The Leader says:

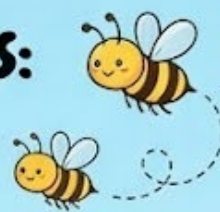
Loving God, thank you for listening to our prayers. Help us live the way Jesus taught us, with gentle hearts and joyful love. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Return to the church

Ask the children to return to the main assembly. Ask them to return quietly and reflect on what they have heard and what they are now doing. Be mindful of children who may have difficulty finding their families.



Jesus' Secret to True Happiness: The Bee-attitudes!



What Makes You Happy? Think About It!



New clothes!

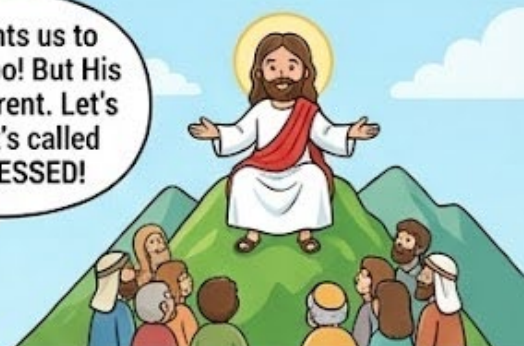


Scoring a goal
in hockey!



Birthdays!

Jesus wants us to be happy, too! But His way is different. Let's find out! It's called being **BLESSED**!

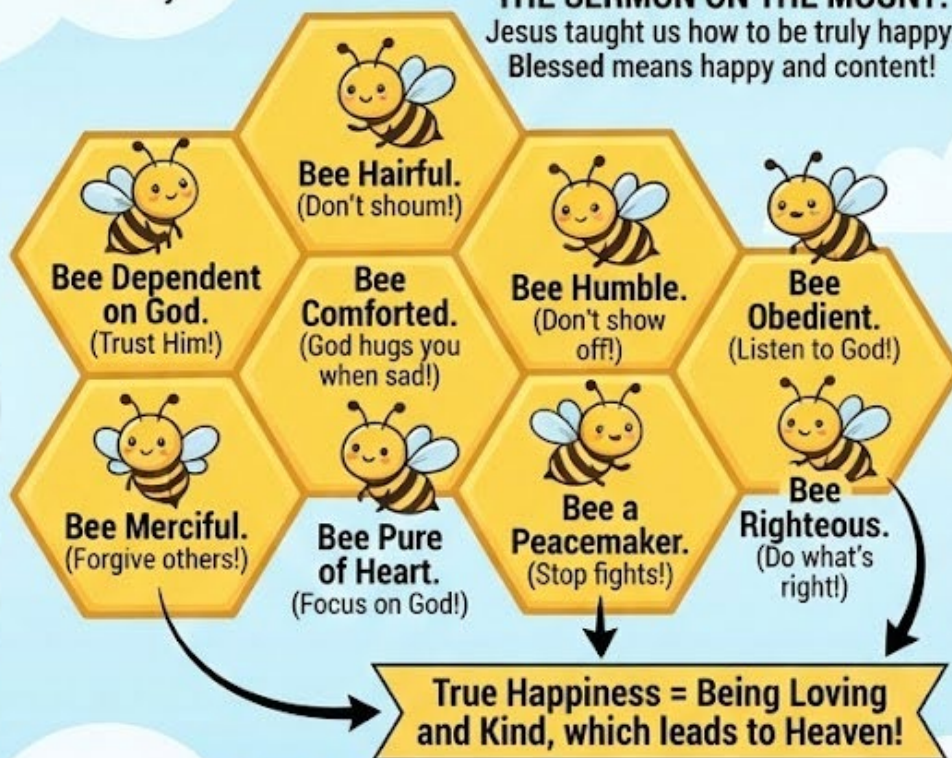


THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT:
Jesus taught us how to be truly happy.
Blessed means happy and content!



Feeling Down?
Having a "Terrible,
Horrible, No Good,
Very Bad Day"?

God is with you!
Even when everything
goes wrong.



How to Bee Loving This Week!

- ☐ Help Mom with dishes or setting the table.
- ☐ Watch your brother or sister.
- ☐ Read a story or help them get ready.
- ☐ Invite a lonely child to play or sit with you.
- ☐ Offer to help a neighbor (like shoveling snow!).
- ☐ Look around every day for ways to help someone in need.



Be loving, be kind, and remember: Jesus loves you! - Mrs. Cole

Readings: Lectionary Sundays and Solemnities,
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