

Worship Plan - Church Year A

2022-2023



Fourth Sunday after Epiphany - 1/29/2023

SERIES THEME

THE SAVIOR'S SERMON

The Greek word epiphany means “appearance.” In the first half of this church season called Epiphany, we saw Jesus appear on the scene, beginning his ministry. He calls his disciples. It is not long before large crowds start following Jesus around Galilee. So, in the second half of this season Jesus is going to teach us what it means to be one of his followers.

Jesus does this through the most famous sermon of all time. It is not delivered while standing in a pulpit but while sitting on a hill. Elevated above the crowd, Jesus’ voice would carry through the air. His followers hung on his every word as the Christ talked about living an authentic Christian life. It is called the Sermon on the Mount.

Our worship the next few weeks will follow this pattern:

Trust in God’s Strength
You Are . . . So Be
Live a Holy Life
Love Your Enemies

THEME OF THE DAY

TRUST IN GOD’S STRENGTH

Jesus begins the Sermon on the Mount with a series of blessings. “Blessed are...” Jesus says, again and again. In the Latin Vulgate, these all begin with the word “beati” which translates as “blessed” or “happy.” Thus, this portion of the sermon is often called “The Beatitudes.” It had to give Jesus’ listeners pause. For what Jesus calls blessed, the world never would. The world praises the strong and the self-sufficient. Jesus calls blessed what others would see as weak or stupid. But, like any good preacher, Jesus is trying to drive home one crucial point. The weaker you are, the more ready you are to rely on God’s strength. The more difficult your present circumstances, the likelier you are to yearn for future reward.

All the readings for today teach this truth. We have no real strength or wisdom of our own. But we don’t need it. Because God’s strength is enough to give the kingdom of heaven to the humble and poor in spirit.

FIRST READING

Zephaniah 2:3; 3:11-13 – The LORD promises that those who are humble, who trust in his strength rather than their own, will not be put to shame.

SECOND READING

1 Corinthians 1:26-31 – Paul points the Corinthians to themselves as an example of how God’s strength is made perfect in weakness.

GOSPEL

*** Matthew 5:1-12 – In the Beatitudes Jesus shows us the outcome of a life that is lived trusting in God’s strength.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:

Setting 4 (incl gradual introduction of new Kyrie and new (but similar/familiar) Gospel Acclamation)

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:

562 - Jesus Paid It All

or

572 - Not What My Hands Have Done

Psalm of the Day:

1

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:

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

Gospel Acclamation setting:

Setting 4

Hymn of the Day:

690 - Blest Are They

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:

813 - He Will Hold Me Fast

Closing Hymn:

923 - Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah

or

926 - Lead Me, Lord

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:

562 - Jesus Paid It All

572 - Not What My Hands Have Done

827 - optional closing - Rejoice, My Heart, Be Glad and Sing

829 - optional third hymn - Take Heart

926 - Lead Me, Lord

Notes for the conservative service:

572 - Not What My Hands Have Done - pretty easy tune, piano or organ

562 - Jesus Paid It All - easy sing, familiar to some

813 - He Will Hold Me Fast

Notes for the ambitious service:

827 - Rejoice, My Heart, Be Glad and Sing - new but not difficult tune for Gerhardt text

829 - Take Heart - a nice new hymn waiting to be discovered/learned

Psalm 31D could be sung as a hymn of trust

926 Lead Me, Lord - Sing this twice (when first while being learned), first by cantor/choir, then assembly.

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Fifth Sunday after Epiphany - 2/5/2023

SERIES THEME

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THEME OF THE DAY

YOU ARE . . . SO BE

Imagine a beautiful guitar, carefully crafted out of the finest mahogany and steel strings. Now imagine that fine instrument is never played. It is placed atop a bookshelf and never touched. It just collects dust. Tragic, right? What a thing is finds fulfillment when that thing does what it was made to do. Of what use is a guitar that makes no music? What would be the point of turning on a lamp and then throwing a heavy blanket over it. It might still be a lamp, but it provides no light. (It only serves as a fire hazard!) Form and function are intimately connected.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus teaches that the same is true of discipleship. He wants us to see that being a disciple and acting as a disciple are intimately connected. When God called us to faith, he declared that we were something new: light, salt, his children. Jesus now encourages us to be what God says we are, so that God might bless the world through us. As Jesus speaks to us, he means to mold our will to his own.

FIRST READING

Exodus 19:1-8 – God made Israel, a nation of slaves, his special people. He wanted Israel to be the kingdom of priests he had called them to be.

SECOND READING

*** 1 Peter 2:9-12 – St. Peter encourages us to be what God has declared us to be: members of a royal priesthood, citizens of a holy nation.

GOSPEL

Matthew 5:13-20 – Jesus declares that his disciples are blessings to this dark, decaying world. He calls us to be what he says we are.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:

Setting 4

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:

630 - Thy Strong Word (primary Hymn of the Day moved forward to opening hymn - selected stanzas if desired)

Psalm of the Day:

18A or 18C

(Psalm of the Day 112 - both psalter selections currently restricted, but perhaps check back in Service Builder; 112B is a nice tune worth learning)

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:

Alleluia. Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. Alleluia.

Gospel Acclamation setting:

Setting 4

Hymn of the Day:

854 - Church of God Elect and Glorious (alternate Hymn of the Day - tight connection to suggested preaching text)

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:

* 668 Jesus Comes Today with Healing

Closing Hymn:

736:1,5 - Lord, You Call Us as Your People

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:

772 - O God Most High

Notes for the conservative service:

Notes for the ambitious service:

772 - O God Most High - a Nation hymn with a new-to-WELS tune but it quotes salt and light

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Sixth Sunday after Epiphany - 2/12/2023

SERIES THEME

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THEME OF THE DAY

LIVE A HOLY LIFE

The word “holy” comes from an Old English word, “halig” which means “whole” or “healthy.” We have a holy God. He wants us to live a holy life, one that is wholly dedicated to him, one that is spiritually and emotionally healthy for us. So, as Jesus continues his Sermon on the Mount, he makes a crucial point that not all his followers (including present day followers) understand well. Jesus came to free us from sin. He did not come to free us to sin. God commands that we live a holy life. He provides dire warnings to remind us just how holy he wants us to be. Today we face a rapid decline in public morals and private piety. Yet, Jesus calls his followers to be different. He urges personal purity.

After examining our lives, we can only despair over our lack of holiness. So, the Gospel Acclamation reminds us to flee to Christ who loves us despite our failures and who sacrificed himself for unholy people. Secure in his grace and empowered by the Holy Spirit, each day we strive to live the holy lives to which we have been called.

FIRST READING

2 Samuel 11:1-17,26,27 – King David committed adultery first in his heart, then in the flesh. David’s example illustrates the danger of unrepentant sin. It is the antithesis of a holy life.

SECOND READING

1 Thessalonians 4:1-12 – Christians sincerely desire to live for Christ. St. Paul explains how. We seek to control our body in a way that is holy.

GOSPEL

*** Matthew 5:21-37 – What a high bar Jesus sets! He calls us to be holy in our relationships with our brothers, our adversaries, our bodies, our spouse, and our God.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:

Setting 4 with non-communion ending

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:

735 - Before You I Kneel

Psalm of the Day:

119A

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:

Alleluia. Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. Alleluia.

Gospel Acclamation setting:

Setting 4

Hymn of the Day:

696 - Take My Life and Let It Be

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:

697 - May We Your Precepts, Lord, Fulfill

Closing Hymn:

835 - Precious Lord, Take My Hand

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:

735 - Before You I Kneel

701 - Order My Life, Lord, as You Will

Notes for the conservative service:

635:1,8,9,3 (5th and 6th commandments) could be used if desiring to reinforce sermon text

701 - Order My Life, Lord, as You Will

Notes for the ambitious service:

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THEME OF THE DAY

LOVE YOUR ENEMIES

Throughout Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount he describes life in the Messiah’s kingdom. It seems completely upside down. He talked about the meek being the ones who will inherit the earth. He said that those who are poor in spirit are actually the most blessed by God.

Now today he tells us to love our enemies. It seems counterintuitive and a recipe for being treated like a doormat. Why would Jesus ask us to do this? It’s simple. We belong to him and are meant to be like him. Christ calls us to love our fellow man, even when they’re against us, because that is exactly how he loves the world. It is how he loves us, even when we treat him like an enemy. It is as simple as this. A heart that belongs to Christ is a heart that is like Christ’s. And a heart that is like Christ’s has no room for vengeance but is filled with love for all.

FIRST READING

*** 1 Samuel 26:7-25 – King Saul had exiled and attempted to kill David—all without cause. David trusted that his reward was with God, and that freed him to be able to love even his enemy Saul.

SECOND READING

Romans 12:9-21 – St. Paul teaches that Spirit-wrought Christian love is infinitely greater than worldly love. Unbelievers love their friends. Believers love even their enemies.

GOSPEL

Matthew 5:38-48 – Jesus’ command to love is so broad and sweeping that no one is to be excluded from our love, not even our enemies.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:

Setting 4

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:

732 - In Unity and Peace

Psalm of the Day:

Psalm 119:33-40 (119B)

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:

Alleluia. Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. Alleluia.

Gospel Acclamation setting:

Setting 4

Hymn of the Day:

729 - Son of God, Eternal Savior

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:

*659 - Jesus Christ, Our Blessed Savior

Closing Hymn:

768 - Lord of All Nations, Grant Me Grace

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:

Notes for the conservative service:

634:1,9,3,4 (5th commandment) could be used if desiring to reinforce sermon text

Notes for the ambitious service: