**Church of the Divine Love**

**FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY**

**JANUARY 29, 2023 10:15 AM**

**HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II**

 THE WORD OF GOD

 Prayer for the New Year – on insert

 Processional Hymn #

Opening Acclamation page 355

 Collect for Purity page 355

 Gloria page 356

 Collect of the Day - lectionary sheet insert

 First Lesson: **Micah 6:1-8**

 Psalm 15

Second Lesson: **1 Corinthians 1:18-31**

Gradual Hymn#

 Gospel: **Matthew 5:1-12**

 Sermon – The Rev. Jean Lenord Quatorze

 Nicene Creed page 358

 Prayers of the People, FormVI page 392

 The Peace

 Welcome and Announcements

 THE HOLY COMMUNION

 Offertory Hymn **#**

Doxology (sung)

 The Great Thanksgiving:

 Eucharistic Prayer D page 372

 Sanctus (S-130 in hymnal) page 373

 The Lord’s Prayer page 364

 The Breaking of the Bread, Anthem & Prayer page 337

 The Communion of the People

 Communion Hymn **#**

 Post Communion Prayer page 365

 Prayer for Peace – on insert

 Prayer of St. Francis page 833

 Dismissal Hymn #

 Dismissal

 **Sermon Sunday January 29, 2023**

Micah 6:1-8; Psalm 15; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31; Matthew 5:1-12.

**Sisters and brothers in Christ,**

Throughout our world, the Church, and our homes a common question is being asked. People want to know if the waters of life are navigable and, if so, how? People are looking for a way to deal with the challenges, the uncertainties, and the difficulties of life. We want some assurance that the direction of our life will offer meaning and connect us to something larger than our individual stories. So how do we move forward? What are we to teach and tell our children and grandchildren? Those are the age-old questions, asked in every generation.

Those questions are, I believe, what President Obama was speaking to in his state of the union address when we kept referring to “winning the future.” We must, he says, out innovate, out educate, and out build the rest of the world. The Republicans and the Tea Party Movement were answering the same questions when they offered their responses that we must repeal Obamacare, end spending, and balance the budget. You can watch those questions being answered on the news as Egyptian protesters and the government confront each other struggling with different ideas and directions of how life should move forward. I recently saw those questions in the tears of a man who, for the first time, accepted financial help as he tries to chart a way through unemployment. More often than not our attempts to navigate life do not make the news. Regardless of whether they are personal struggles or family matters, however, they are just as real and of no less concern to God. Each of us could tell stories about the questions we face, the challenges we confront, and the difficulties we must overcome. Sometimes we seem to succeed and other times we don’t.

Most of us have been taught to navigate the waters of life through power, strength, accomplishment, and acquisition. We work to be rich so we can have what we want. We seek power so we can take what we want. We argue to be right so we can have our way. We compete to win so we’ll be respected and admired. We want to be beautiful so we’ll be liked and desired. Any of that sound familiar? Ever tried those ways of getting through life? Those attitudes fill headline news, magazine articles, tabloid pictures, television, and our own lives. They find their origin in the idea that we are to be self-made men and women, that we are to build up ourselves and make a life. After all we must look out for number one because if we don’t no one will. At least that’s what many of us have been told. For too long that has been the myth with which we have lived. Jesus’ life and teaching fly in the face of that myth. Jesus offers a different way of navigating life.

The waters of life, he says, are navigable. But it’s not through power, strength, accomplishment, or acquisition. The way forward is not the way we’ve always done it. It is not enough for us, as believers and followers of Jesus, to simply make over a little piece of our world or life. It is not enough to just reform a political or economic system. Navigating life is not about overcoming circumstances or other people. It is about overcoming ourselves. If you want to know what overcoming yourself looks like then look at the beatitudes. Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are those who mourn. Blessed are the meek. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. Blessed are the merciful. Blessed are the pure in heart. Blessed are the peacemakers. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake.

That is how we navigate life. That is how meet the challenges, the uncertainties, and the difficulties of life. That is what we are to teach our children and grandchildren. A lifetime of living the beatitudes day after day, year after year, is how we overcome ourselves. The beatitudes are not simply Jesus’ helpful hints for happy living. They are not the church’s version of Hints from Heloise. They are descriptive of God’s mind and Jesus’ heart. They are kingdom values and reveal what kingdom life is like. They shape and form our lives and longings to be like God’s life and longings. That’s a pretty different approach. Most of the time we twist and distort God’s life and longings to fit ours. That’s why the beatitudes are so radical and often seem so out of reach.

As we hear Jesus’ words and consider the beatitudes it’s easy to look at ourselves and say, that is not me, that is not the world, that is not even the church. You are right, it’s not. We tend to look at what we are not. God, however, focuses on what we can become, who we are called to be. The temptation is to think that the beatitudes are rules or conditions for being blessed or receiving our heavenly reward. They are not that at all. They are not about building up, accomplishing, or acquiring. They are about letting go, surrendering, living with a vulnerable and open heart. That does not mean we run away, back down, or isolate ourselves from the realities of our life and world. It means we engage them in a different way, Jesus’ way. The beatitudes teach us to trust God more than the external circumstances of our lives. They invite dependence on God rather than self-reliance.

In today’s world that sounds a lot like weakness and foolishness. That’s what it sounds like in every age. But to those who are being saved it is the power of God. God chose what is foolish to shame the wise and what is weak to shame the strong. The beatitudes are nothing less than the way of the cross. The fullest expression of a blessedness life is seen in Jesus’ crucifixion. If we live the beatitudes, they will take us to the cross. In the trauma and setbacks of life we discover that we cannot do life by ourselves. As we admit our need of God, we find purity of heart. The arrogance of self-sufficiency gives way to meekness. We realize that all that we are and have been from God and we begin to know ourselves as poor in spirit. Our own misfortunes awaken and connect us to the pain of the world for which we cannot help but mourn. We think less about ourselves and become merciful to others. We have nowhere else to go and so we turn our gaze back to God. The longer we gaze at God the more we hunger and thirst for righteousness, for God’s life, and we become peacemakers reconciling ourselves to God and our neighbor. This is the life for which Christ’s disciples are willing to be persecuted, a life of righteousness, the life for which Christ died and rose again.

The beatitudes are not so much about what we do, our actions, but how we do, our being. They are less about actions and more about relationships. To live the beatitudes is to live a life of reckless, exuberant, self-abandonment to God and our neighbor. That’s called love. The only reason we can do that is because we know and trust ourselves to have already been blessed by God. We live the beatitudes as a response to God blessing us. That is the way of Christ. That is not only the way forward through this life, it is the way to life. If we are to follow Christ it must become our way**. Amen!**

 4 EPIPHANY 10:15 AM HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II (also on zoom) COFFEE HOUR FOLLOWS

 MONDAY 8:00 PM AA MEETING

 WEDNESDAY 7:00 PM AL-ANON MEETING

 THURSDAY 10AM-2PM THRIFT SHOP

 8:00 PM AA MEETING

 SATURDAY 10AM-2PM THRIFT SHOP

 5 EPIPHANY 10:15 AM HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II (also on zoom)

 FOLLOWED BY PARISH ANNUAL MEETING

SUPPORT THE FOOD PANTRY – DROP OFF IN THE KITCHEN

 Today Next Week

Eucharistic Minister Jess Berbeck Roe Prosser

Coffee Hour Giordanos Annual Meeting

 **PARISH PRAYER LIST**

Give to all who suffer the refreshing waters of your compassion and healing. Make them dwell in the safety of your care even in the midst of all that troubles them. Especially we remember before you:

Grace Schinella Harriet Capers Bob Curley

John Mulligan Arlene Goodenough Celeste

Chris Dickson Kate Jones Deb P.

Michael Echevarria John Rocco Gabriel

Barbara Stinson Michael & Family Warren

Charlotte H. Bernie Walther Anthony

Mo (Rachael) Bill Conklin Sr. Carolyn

Anthony Paribello Barbara Curran Del

Ciara Robert Sweat Aidan

Sally & Roger Sophia Carol K.

People of Haiti Christopher & Family Julia

Mary & Family People of Ukraine Tim

Nathan Treadwell Vincent Art

Margaret Lourdes S. Kaylee

Help us speak words of encouragement and offer deeds of kindness to them. Bring us with them, into the unending joy of your kingdom. Amen