

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time – February 1, 2026 – Good Shepherd Parish

Scripture Reading: Zephaniah 2:3; 3:12-13

Seek the LORD, all you humble of the earth, who have observed his law; seek justice, seek humility; perhaps you may be sheltered on the day of the LORD's anger.

But I will leave as a remnant in your midst a people humble and lowly, who shall take refuge in the name of the LORD: the remnant of Israel. They shall do no wrong and speak no lies; nor shall there be found in their mouths a deceitful tongue; they shall pasture and couch their flocks with none to disturb them.

Psalm: Ps 146:6-7, 8-9, 9-10

R. (Matt 5:3) Blessed are the poor in spirit; the kingdom of heaven is theirs!

The LORD keeps faith forever,
secures justice for the oppressed,
gives food to the hungry.
The LORD sets captives free.

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

The LORD gives sight to the blind;
the LORD raises up those who were bowed down.
The LORD loves the just;
the LORD protects strangers.

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

The fatherless and the widow the LORD sustains,
but the way of the wicked he thwarts.
The LORD shall reign forever;
your God, O Zion, through all generations.
Alleluia.

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

Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:26-31

Consider your own calling, brothers and sisters. Not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. Rather, God chose the foolish of the world to shame the wise, and God chose the weak of the world to shame the strong, and God chose the lowly and despised of the world, those who count for nothing, to reduce to nothing those who are something, so that no human being might boast before God. It is due to him that you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, as well as righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, so that, as it is written, "Whoever boasts, should boast in the Lord."

Gospel: Matt 5:1-12a

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he had sat down, his disciples came to him. He began to teach them, saying:

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

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

Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the land.

Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the clean of heart,
for they will see God.

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

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

Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you falsely because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven."



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INVITATION TO PRAY

Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presence of God.

Proclaim the Scriptures out loud.

As you listen to the scriptures be attentive to a word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

INVITATION TO REFLECT

Jesus took special notice of the “disadvantaged” people, as our culture likes to call them. On Sunday we will hear him explain that the most blessed people are the poor [in spirit], the ones who grieve, the ones who are meek, the ones hungry and thirsty for fairness [“righteousness”], the merciful, and the peacemakers. It is easier to see why the peacemakers and the merciful and the ones hungering for fairness deserve blessedness. These are people we already admire. But the poor? And those who grieve? Oh, and I forgot about the ones whom people insult and persecute and utter every kind of evil falsely against because of Jesus. Ouch. Most of us would have compiled just the opposite list. Blessed are you if you are rich. Blessed are you if never have to grieve over losing someone you love. Blessed are you if you are admired and free of enemies and spoken well of at all times. Don't these sound much more like the good life we want for ourselves and our friends? Yes, in a way. But isn't there a danger in these wonderful sounding states of life. Riches and honor can be lures that lead away from love. If I am rich I am tempted to let that be my identity, external though it is. If I am highly admired I might well be enticed to believe that I actually am what people say about me. Either of these can lead to pride, which in this case means paying attention only to myself and what pleases me. If this happens, and if it leads to the bad kind of pride, still a quiet voice inside us will cry, “I am your real self and you have covered me over. You are smothering me. Help!”

God loves each of us in this “real self.” It is the part of us that God knows best and loves most. God calls us to be what we really are, persons who are loved as we are, and who love in return. What we own, how honored we feel, how swollen up with pride we are—these are undependable. They get in the way, sometimes tragically. God's Spirit dwells deeper within us, and if we learn to live from that inner spot we will find we are living lives of peace and fruitfulness. That is why the beatitudes make deep sense. If we do learn to live from the home within us, we will find God's love there. And we will find also love of others, comfortably dwelling with it. This will be true even if poverty and insults are our external condition. It takes a while to learn, sometimes a great while. Watch Jesus if you want to know what it is like.

INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING

1. God promises to leave a humble “remnant” in the people's midst. One of their rewards was “... they shall pasture and couch their flocks with none to disturb them.” Is there a certain happiness found in the love of God?
2. This reading begins with “Consider your calling.” How is a “calling” different from a commandment? Are such qualities as “foolish, weak, lowly” commandments or gifts for the heart to be sought and prayed for?
3. Can the Beatitudes become a way of life for you? If one of them becomes important to you, might the others follow?

INVITATION TO ACT

Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations.

CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY

Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another's openness and sensitivity. Conclude with the following:

Grant us, Lord our God, that we may honor you with all our mind, and love everyone in truth of heart. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

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Prayer to St. Michael

St. Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our defense against the wickedness and snares of the Devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray, and do thou, O Prince of the heavenly hosts, by the power of God, thrust into hell Satan, and all the evil spirits, who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen