

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

February 1, 2026

Zephaniah 2:3; 3:12-13

Psalms 146

1 Corinthians 1:26-31

Matthew 5:1-12

BLESSED ARE YOU

We have all probably heard the saying that those who preach should "comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable." That would seem to be an apt description of the Book of Zephaniah in general and could also be applied to today's readings. The prophet Zephaniah "pulls no punches" in pointing out the evils of his day; however, today's word from him is actually that of comfort and peace.

In the Beatitudes, Jesus praises those who suffer - especially for righteousness' sake - and promises them a great reward. Blessed are they...and blessed are you!

ZEPHANIAH

The prophet Zephaniah preached in Judah around 630 BC, early in the reign of King Josiah before the reforms of 622 took effect. This was a time of "religious degradation" - idolatry was rampant in the land. Much of Zephaniah's prophecy centers around the Lord threatening a terrible judgment on the nation.

However, our second reading shows a change of tone in the prophecy. The reading begins with an exhortation from chapter 2 to "Seek the Lord all you humble of the earth, who have observed the law; seek justice, seek humility, perhaps you may be sheltered on the day of the Lord's anger."

GOSPEL

Today's gospel is from St. Matthew - the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount. We are all familiar with the Beatitudes. They have been called the Lord's "recipe for happiness," since that is what the word "beatitude" means.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, the merciful, the clean of heart, the peacemakers, and those who are persecuted. Although it might not appear so immediately, their lot will be reversed and they will be rewarded.

1 CORINTHIANS

In our second reading, St. Paul reminds the Corinthians that they were not the "cream of the crop," in terms of worldly standards when they were called by God. Not many were powerful nor noble, but God chose them anyway.

God's way is to choose the foolish, weak, lowly and despised of this world to "reduce to nothing those who are something." Why does God operate this way? "So that no human being might boast before God."

The point is that Jesus Christ - and he alone - is our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. "Whoever boasts should boast in the Lord."

FAITH TO LIVE RIGHTEOUSLY

The Beatitudes challenge us to virtuous living, which really is a test of our faith in the Lord. It takes faith to trust that, even though evil seems to be gaining the upper hand and triumphing over us, God still has the last

word. He has promised and he will fulfill it. "God works all things together unto good for those who love him" (Rom. 8:28). Lord, grant us the faith and courage to live out the Beatitudes!