

**Lesson Plans that Work**  
**Year A – Fourth Sunday after Epiphany**  
**Lesson Plans for Younger Children**

**Scripture: Matthew 5:1-12**

*Because in the mystery of the Word made flesh, you have caused a new light to shine in our hearts, to give the knowledge of your glory in the face of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord.*  
(Book of Common Prayer, page 378)

Accept the light we have received and shine it forth! It is not about shining the light in other's faces, blinding them, but holding the light in open hands.

**A Notation for This Week's Gospel**

We make it so complicated. The prophet Micah told us: "Do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with your God". Jesus invites us to follow him and describes the attributes of those who follow. Where does Jesus go? What does he value?

**Theme: Life-giving Attitudes**

**Before:** The Beatitudes (the focus of today's passage) are beautiful, abstract, and way over the heads of the children. Because the children will hear these beautiful words again and again, we offer something to build upon in later years. And so the concept becomes: What do Jesus' friends do? You will need paper and crayons and transparent tape.

**Beginning:** One more verse of the song is offered: (see previous weeks)

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine  
Won't let anyone blow (and make a blowing motion) it out. No!  
I'm gonna let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

Tell the children that when Jesus gathered some helpers around him and started to tell people what God wanted them all to do; they wanted to know the rules. What are we supposed to do? Jesus helped them understand what God wants them to be doing.

**Praying:** Thank you, God, for sending Jesus to show us what you want us to do. Amen.

**The Story:** Jesus looked out and a whole bunch of people were sitting there, waiting for Jesus to tell them what to do. What are the rules? What should we do? Jesus thought about it and started to talk to the people. Jesus told the people to be good friends to each other. Jesus said being good friends would make people Blessed – which is another word for happy.

**Activity:** Gather the children in a circle and ask them to tell you what things we do when we are friends. What happens when two of us want to play with the same thing? What do we do when one of us is really sad? When we have a job to do, like, for instance, putting all the toys back in their box, how can we make it easier for all of us? (Create opportunities for the children to notice cooperation, sharing, caring, and attending to each other.)

**Activity:** Invite the children we need a child to draw a pictures from the story today and from our discussion. They could be pictures of Jesus talking to all the people as well as pictures of children doing the things we talked about: sharing, working together, helping each other when something is sad; celebrating when something is happy. When the pictures are completed, ask the children to decide how to position their pictures around the picture(s) of Jesus – showing that the children who are being friends to others have Jesus in the middle of their work.

**Getting Closure:** Invite the children to share their pictures.

**Closing Prayer:** Thank you, God, that you need our help, too, to get Jesus' work done. Help us to remember how we can help. Amen.

*Printed by the Office for Formation and Vocation Ministries of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, 815 Second Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017.*

*© 2013 The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America. All rights reserved.*

**Lesson Plans that Work**  
**Year A – Fourth Sunday after Epiphany**  
**Lesson Plans for Older Children**

**Scripture: Matthew 5:1-12**

*Because in the mystery of the Word made flesh, you have caused a new light to shine in our hearts, to give the knowledge of your glory in the face of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord.*  
(*Book of Common Prayer*, page 378)

Accept the light we have received and shine it forth! It is not about shining the light in other's faces, blinding them, but holding the light in open hands.

**A Notation for this Week's Gospel**

We make it so complicated. The prophet Micah told us: "Do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with your God." Jesus invites us to follow him and describes the attributes of those who follow. Where does Jesus go? What does he value?

**Theme: Life-giving Attitudes**

**Before Class:** If you and the class have already looked at the Beatitudes earlier, you may want to quickly summarize the first three (verses 3 – 5) and move on to the rest. And if you are starting fresh with this passage, you may have to make some decisions about how you allocate the time. If there is not time to talk about all 9 you may need to skip some to be sure to leave time for getting closure. You will need large pieces of paper to record the paraphrases the children come up with, and if there is time, that they illustrate. Felt markers would be helpful as would masking tape to secure the work in the classroom.

**Beginning:** Ask the group if they can tell you something Jesus has been showing us about the Kingdom of God. (God is right here with us – not off someplace.) Tell them that today we have some clues from Jesus about how we are to be with each other in the Kingdom.

**Opening Prayer:** Thank you, God, that you sent Jesus to help us figure out what is important. Help us to discover how you call each of us. Amen.

**The Story:** Suggest a slightly different way to read today's passage. The teacher will read the narrator's part (verses 1 – 2) and the children will read verses 3 – 12, each child reading one verse, going around until all the verses have been read.

**Option:** Take each of the statements and translate them into words that would communicate in a school. The teacher can scribe what they come up with. Tell them that often the best way to figure it out is to find the opposite and then notice why Jesus chose the way he did. Some clues, if they get stuck follow:

Verse 3 – "poor in spirit" – opposite: having too much "stuff"

Verse 4 – “those who mourn” – opposite: trying to pretend it doesn’t hurt when we lose someone (to death, moving away, or just stopping being friends) or ignoring someone else’s pain. And, if “comfort” does not mean all the hurt goes away, what might it mean?

Verse 5 – “meek” – opposite: trying to be a big shot – get all the attention – grab all you can.

Verse 6 – “righteousness” Opposite: know-it-all, World’s Foremost Authority, I am busy talking so I cannot listen to you. Another opposite can be: I don’t have time for God.

Verse 7 – “merciful” – Opposite: I don’t care about your problems – I pay attention only to what I want to do.

Verse 8 – “pure in heart” – opposite: I will give up what I believe in order to be accepted by the in group. I act in different ways to please those I am with.

Verse 9 – “peacemakers” – opposite: I have to have my own way, I will not cooperate or even listen to another point of view.

Verse 10 – ‘persecuted’ – opposite: wimp out when you need to stand up for what you know is right.

Verse 11 – “reviled” – opposite: when people put you down, you do whatever you can to get them to like you even if it means doing something bad.

The mood changes in verse 12. What happens when we hang in there and do our best to do what God asks us to do? (Ask the children how they show each other “Yeah! Way to go! Could be a high five, a fist bump, or whatever is current at their school.)

**Activity:** If time permits, ask the children to choose one or two of the Beatitudes and write their paraphrase on the pieces of paper that could then be illustrated (if there is time) or posted in your classroom. If there are too few children to record all the work, the teacher could take one or two of the verses and write what the class has come up with on the sheets of paper.

**Getting Closure:** Figure out how to post what you and the children have created.

**Closing Prayer:** Thank you, God, that you are there for us as we try to do what you ask us to do. Remind us of these words as we go out into the world. Amen.

## **Matthew 5: 1 – 12**

### **The Beatitudes**

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 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.

*Printed by the Office for Formation and Vocation Ministries of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, 815 Second Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017.*

*© 2013 The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America. All rights reserved.*

**Lesson Plans that Work**  
**Year A – Fourth Sunday after Epiphany**  
**Gospel Lesson for Adults**

**Scripture: Matthew 5:1-12**

*Because in the mystery of the Word made flesh, you have caused a new light to shine in our hearts, to give the knowledge of your glory in the face of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord.*  
(*Book of Common Prayer*, page 378)

Accept the light we have received and shine it forth! It is not about shining the light in other's faces, blinding them, but holding the light in open hands.

**A Notation for This Week's Gospel**

We make it so complicated. The prophet Micah told us: "Do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with your God." Jesus invites us to follow him and describes the attributes of those who follow. Where does Jesus go? What does he value?

**Theme: Life-giving Attitudes**

**Before Class:** You will need copies of the Bible.

**Beginning:** Tell the group that today we have the Core Values of Jesus that are called the Beatitudes, which we could think of as the Be Attitudes.

**Opening Prayer:** Thank you, God for this rich passage and your patience with us as we unpack it. Help us to hear what you are calling us to do and who you are calling us to be. Amen.

**The Scripture: Matthew 5: 1 – 12** Invite the group to share in reading the scripture today. One person will start, and after each phrase, invite them to pause before the next person begins. Continue in this manner until all 12 verses have been read. Allow a moment or two of silence when all verses have been read.

Then invite the group to re-read these verses to themselves, and then whoever wants to can speak about which verse spoke to them – either in consolation or not being able to make sense of it. You may not have sufficient time to unpack every one of the verses, so stay with the ones your group needs to stay with.

Following are some clues for each verse.

**Verse 3** "poor in spirit" – what might the opposite be? (I am way too stressed out with my too busy life to waste time listening for God. I have what I need. I did the Sunday School thing when I was a kid, now I need to live my own life.) How might the positive look for us? (We are open to what the Spirit is saying to us. We want to grow in our faith.)

**Verse 4** "mourn" and "comfort" – To mourn is to be vulnerable to the loss, death of a loved one, of course, but what other losses confront us? (Family alienations, people we love moving away,

financial losses, health losses, all the things we have to “let go.”) If “comfort” does not mean all the pain goes away, what can we say it means? (Awareness that we do not do this alone. Accepting the reaching out of others. Etc.)

**Verse 5** “meek” – Contrast “meek” with “wimp.” Consider “meek” as comfortable with yourself, not seeking more ways to control or become more apparently powerful. How might that make us more grounded?

**Verse 6** “righteousness” – How might this be a call to get ourselves right with God and open to new insights about God instead of worrying about whether others are sufficiently “righteous?” Consider how it has been our experience that when we focused more of our energies seeking God, that we have noticed being fed by God.

**Verse 7** “merciful” – Could it be that choosing mercy for another creates a larger place in ourselves to receive mercy? (We probably have noticed that the more we love, the more capable we are of love. Could this be a similar phenomenon?) Would it make it any easier to have mercy for someone who has offended, if we recall times we received mercy we did not expect? And how have times we have not received the mercy we expected hardened our hearts so we are less merciful to others? How could we break the cycle?

**Verse 8** “pure in heart.” – Could this mean getting what we do to be in sync with who we are? How do we balance the competitive nature of much of our work life with what we believe is the right and moral way to be?

**Verse 9** “peacemakers” – What can each of us do to create spaces where cooperation and collaboration help us find middle ground? Are there times we can accommodate “both/and” instead of “either/or?”

**Verse 10** “persecuted” – Few of us will be hauled out to the edge of town and stoned for our faith, but many of us have felt the sting of some form of prejudice – even that we are silly Christians. And if we have not personally experienced significant “persecution” how might we have (even unwittingly) been part of the persecution of others? (People whose faith is radically different from our own, skin color or origin different and threatening to us; people whose financial situation or physical challenges appall us?)

**Verse 11** “reviled” – Again, little in our lives may parallel what Jesus knew would come to the early believers. Little was available that would classify as “therapy” which is available and valuable to people who have been “reviled.” How can we balance standing up for what we believe is true without “reviling” those with whom we differ?

**Verse 12** “rejoice and be glad” – The mood has clearly shifted. If this is not about insuring a secure place “in Heaven,” what could this discipline Jesus has laid out do to enhance the quality of our life now? What are some differences between “rejoice and be glad” and the world’s understanding of “happy?”

**Getting Closure:** Invite one person to read Matthew 5: 3 – 12.

**Closing Prayer:** Thank you, God, for these verses that can help us stay in sync with your call to each of us. Be with us so we can better see and hear your call. Amen.

## **Matthew 5: 1 – 12**

### **The Beatitudes**

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 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.

*Printed by the Office for Formation and Vocation Ministries of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, 815 Second Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017.*

*© 2013 The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America. All rights reserved.*