

**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.

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