

## EPIPHANY FOUR, YEAR A, FEBRUARY 1, 2026

When Jesus went up that Galilean hillside and opened his mouth to teach, the world was not peaceful. Rome ruled with an iron fist. Political factions were fierce and suspicious of one another. Religion itself had become a battleground of purity tests, power grabs, and public shaming. Families were divided. Anger simmered in the streets. Anxiety sat in people's bones.

When Jesus stood on that hillside and spoke blessings, he spoke into a world full of fear, division, and wounded hearts. In that way, his world is not so different from ours. We live in a politically charged moment where people worry more about defeating opponents than serving neighbors. Public discourse has traded substance for insults. Elections become moral battles; friendships splinter; families avoid one another at holidays.

When Jesus began to talk to the people gathered on that hillside he did not deliver a manifesto, not a strategy, not a campaign speech but a blessing. Jesus begins with blessing, not cursing. With promise, not threat. With tenderness, not vitriol. And it matters, because that ancient world is not so different from ours.

We live in a moment where anger seems to fuel everything. The loudest voices often get the most attention. Neighbors view each other with suspicion. Social media rewards outrage. Politics thrives on humiliation rather than humility. We treat one another as enemies long before we ever learn each other's names. The vitriol in today's America is not merely political — it's spiritual. The vitriol in America today is spiritual. It eats away at our ability to see Christ in one another. And even though there are many Christians who want to dismiss the Beatitudes as being too liberal or woke these are Jesus' teachings and right now the Beatitudes are exactly what we need.

Blessed are the poor in spirit. Jesus is naming the humility of those who know their need for God. In a culture obsessed with winning, with being right, with never backing down, Jesus blesses those honest enough to admit they don't have it all together. Today's rhetoric tell us: "Never show weakness. Never admit wrong. Never apologize. Jesus says the opposite: "Blessed are those who know their need of grace."

Blessed are those who mourn. This is not simply mourning death. It is grieving the brokenness of the world. It is for those who see injustice, violence, cruelty, and do not shrug it off. It is for those who watch our national discourse fall into contempt and feel genuine sorrow. Hatred numbs us and mockery replaces mourning. But Jesus declares: "Blessed are those with tender hearts that still break at the brokenness around us."

Blessed are the meek. Meekness is not weakness. It's strength. It's self-control in a world addicted to retaliation. The meek do not need to win at any cost. They do not tear down. They do not humiliate. They are patient enough to let God be God. Vitriol says: "If they hit you verbally, hit harder. If they shame you, publicly shame them." Jesus says: "Blessed are the gentle... for they will inherit the earth." It's strange and almost absurd until we realize Jesus really means it: the world is not saved by force, but by love.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. Righteousness is not about being right but about being faithful. It is about longing for a world where justice and mercy kiss, where dignity is restored, where systems heal, where people flourish. Vitriol hungers for victory. Jesus blesses those who hunger for righteousness not for their side to win, but for God's will to be done which embraces justice, love compassion and mercy.

Blessed are the merciful. This is where Jesus' words feel like a direct confrontation with our current state of affairs. Mercy is in short supply. The vitriol of our age encourages cancellation, mockery, and scorn. It teaches us to define people by their worst moments, their worst posts, or the worst stereotype of their group. But mercy says: "You are more than the worst thing you've ever done." If we want to heal our communities, we must cultivate mercy in speech, in judgment, in daily interactions, even in how we talk about and with those we disagree with.

Blessed are the pure in heart. Purity in Scripture is about singular devotion. It's about hearts not warped by cynicism, hatred, or manipulation. Vitriol thrives on suspicion and accusation. But Jesus blesses those who see with clear eyes and who refuse to let bitterness cloud their vision — for "they will see God." And if they can see God, they can certainly see God's image in others.

Blessed are the peacemakers. Peacemakers are not peacekeepers. They don't maintain the status quo. They don't ignore conflict. They enter into it with courage and compassion. Peacemakers build bridges in a world of walls. They listen without surrendering truth. They speak truth without surrendering love. And here is the hard part: peacemakers will upset everyone. The vitriol of America demands sides. Peacemaking demands faithfulness.

Blessed are the persecuted. This final blessing reminds us that living by the Beatitudes will not make us popular. The world does not reward humility, mercy, or peacemaking. Those who try will often be misunderstood, mocked, or dismissed as naïve. But Jesus says: "Rejoice, for great is your reward in heaven." Why? Because the Beatitudes are not philosophical suggestions or moral ideals they are a description of God's kingdom that we are responsible for bringing into the world right now: which is God's love, justice, compassion and mercy!

So, what does this mean for us today? It means the Beatitudes are not passive. They are a call to resist the violence of hatred, to refuse the comfort of silence, to stand with the oppressed, to speak truth even when it costs us.

The Church cannot mirror the whims of the culture and call it faithfulness. If the Beatitudes are God's commandments to us, then our witness must look different from the world's shouting matches. It must look like Jesus: humble, merciful, fierce in love, relentless in justice, ready to bless even those who curse us.

The Beatitudes call us to a different posture. In a world of shouting we're called to humility. In a world of fury we are called to gentleness. In a world of contempt we are called to show mercy. In a world of factions we are called to peacemaking. In a world of cynicism we are called to purity of heart. The Beatitudes are not just blessings — they are invitations.

They invite us to imagine what it would look like if Christians were known not for how loudly we condemn, but how deeply we bless. What would happen if we approached national discourse with tenderness, not teeth. If we resisted the temptation to caricature those we disagree with. If we refused to let media, politicians, or algorithms drag us into fear and hatred. We do not have to agree on policies to agree on dignity. We do not have to vote the same way to treat each other as bearers of God's image. And we do not have to surrender our convictions to practice mercy, humility, and peace. This is the kingdom Christ invites us to embody — not someday, but today.

The world has enough outrage. The Church is called to beatitude to be a supreme blessing. The world may shout, but Jesus blesses. And wherever his blessings take root, life and hope grows. So may we hunger and thirst for righteousness. May we mourn what is broken and wrong. May we show mercy even when the world mocks it. May we practice meekness in a culture of aggression. May we make peace — costly peace — with courage. May we see God, and in seeing God, see one another. Because in the end, the Beatitudes are not about escape. They are about transformation. Jesus looks at a divided, angry world and says: “Blessed are you... for the kingdom of heaven is yours.” Go and embrace and live these blessings for your life and faith depend on it. Amen.