

**Ps 15; Micah 6:1-8; 1 Cor 1 :18-31; Mt 5:1-12
01-29-17 – Fourth Sunday after Epiphany**

Shall we journey on seeking the Light of the World as we go? In other words, we are marching in the light of the Epiphany – the appearing of the Light to the whole world. T.S. Eliot, in his poem, *The Journey of the Magi*, writes about the wise men's difficult travels to Bethlehem:

*All this was a long time ago, I
remember,
And I would do it again, but set down
This set down
This: were we led all that way for
Birth or Death? There was a Birth,
(famouspoetsandpoems.com)*

The wise men came west in hope – and returned home full of faith in this young Messiah. And Eliot tells us they went on in life – but hated the idolatry of the world after that. They journeyed on in holy discontent with the status quo – the lack of hope and the lack of compassion in their world – our world.

This miracle baby – this Jesus – was born to be the sacrifice for all of us. Sinners that we are, in His great and profound love God desires to make you and me vessels of His glory – His light – in all places and at all times. St John gives us God’s promise that when we see Him at the second coming – we will be like Him. We shall see Him as He is and we shall be like Him. Could you and I hope to be like Him **even now** – could we be a little like Him? What does that look like?

We bear in ourselves the picture of the stable in Bethlehem – birth. And, we bear in ourselves the picture of the cross – death on the hill in Jerusalem. The ultimate meaning of both these bold images is resurrection – birth into the eternal life of God. We are messengers, and we have a set of instructions – lying open before us here – like the instructions in an Ikea or a Tronix project spread out on the floor. It is here, if we have the will to open it and read it – and make it our own.

Micah says, “Do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with your God.”

The Prophet Micah is a country boy. He is suspicious of everything about the big city, Jerusalem. The great prophet to royalty, Isaiah, was bringing the Word of God there in Jerusalem at the same time that Micah was preaching down in his village of Moresheth. And both men foresee doom for Judah. The Assyrians have decimated Israel – plundered and stolen everything. But, Judah is shielded by the hand of God – they are in political trouble – but they continue in their loose, idolatrous lifestyle. Injustice is rampant – the poor have nothing – the rich have everything. God even sends a godly king, Hezekiah, after the evil ruler Ahaz.

Micah sees the judgment of the nation in terms of a lawsuit that God is bringing against her. After the wonders of the Exodus out of the slavery of Egypt, and deliverance from the evil intentions of Balak of Moab, they have turned away from the one true God to worship idols and forget the matters of faithfulness, justice and humility. Micah proclaims that God loves these things much more than blood sacrifices. This is what the Lord requires: “do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with your God.”

Our spirits yearn to be pleasing to the Lord, but the daily journey gets busy – and schedules leave no time – and we forget. And after just a few weeks, many find that they have not set aside a quiet few moments – quarter hour – half hour – to meet and commune with the Creator. *“Martin Luther is famous for commenting, ‘I have so much to do today that I’m going to need to spend three hours in prayer in order to be able to get it all done.’”* (christianitytoday.com)

Are you meeting the Lord daily – abiding in His Word – praying – committing yourself to follow Jesus?

I heard an interview on BBC’s *Witness* program. A man named Leslie Binns, a British ex-soldier and military hero in the Afghanistan war, had saved his money and trained and planned – and at last was climbing Mt. Everest. He was just 12 hours and 1,650 feet from the Everest summit last May. Suddenly, rolling down the hill toward him was a climber. She had slipped and was sliding uncontrollably toward death. He braced himself and caught her. Her name was Sunita Hazra. He quickly saw she was out of O₂ and in

desperate condition. He looked up at the summit – a boyhood dream about to come true. In that instant, he decided – he would clip her to his line and get her to the next camp down, rather than allow her to die alone. He got her set up with his spare oxygen tank. On the way down, he found another member of her party, also in danger of freezing. He tried to help him, but that man later died. He got Sunita into the tent at the camp, put her in his own sleeping bag after trying to warm her frostbitten fingers with a thermos of ginger tea. He was exhausted and fell asleep, and the woman got the care she so desperately needed. His regrets were real about his own climb to the summit, but he was truly happy he could save a stranger's life.

Leslie Binns is planning another ascent of Mt. Everest this spring. Sunita Hazra cannot say enough good things about her rescuer who delivered her from death on the mountain. Leslie Binns acted with simplicity, hopefulness and compassion. He still doesn't think it's a big deal.

We hear Jesus' words from the Gospel of Matthew open before us today, and we often feel we could never live up to them. Listen again:

"You're blessed when you're at the end of your rope. With less of you there is more of God and his rule.

"You're blessed when you feel you've lost what is most dear to you. Only then can you be embraced by the One most dear to you.

"You're blessed when you're content with just who you are—no more, no less. That's the moment you find yourselves proud owners of everything that can't be bought.

"You're blessed when you've worked up a good appetite for God. He's food and drink in the best meal you'll ever eat.

"You're blessed when you care. At the moment of being 'care-full,' you find yourselves cared for.

"You're blessed when you get your inside world—your mind and heart—put right. Then you can see God in the outside world.

"You're blessed when you can show people how to cooperate instead of compete or fight. That's when you discover who you really are, and your place in God's family.

“You’re blessed when your commitment to God provokes persecution. The persecution drives you even deeper into God’s kingdom.”

(Mt 5:1-10 MSG)

What does the Lord require? Journey with Him in simplicity, hopefulness and compassion.

Amen.