

**BERN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
820 West Leesport Road, Leesport, PA 19533



**FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY**  
Sunday, January 29, 2023 — 10:00 a.m.

## **INTRODUCTION**

*Who are the blessed ones of God? For Micah, they are those who do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God. For Paul, they are the ones who find wisdom in the weakness of the cross. For Jesus, they are the poor, the meek, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, those who mourn, and those who hunger for righteousness. In baptism we find our blessed identity and calling in this countercultural way of living and serving.*

## **PRESERVICE MUSIC**

**PRELUDE**                    “Panis Angelicus”                    -Cesar Franck

## **WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

( \* ) Please stand as you are able.

LBW (green hymnal)      WOV (blue hymnal)

## **GATHERING**

### **\* CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

*All may make the sign of the cross, the sign that is marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.*

P: In the name of the Father, and of the ☩ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

P: Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

C: **Amen.**

P: If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

*Silence for reflection and self-examination.*

P: Most merciful God,

C: **we confess that we are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen.**

P: Almighty God, in his mercy, has given his Son to die for us and, for his sake, forgives us all our sins. As a called and ordained minister of the Church of Christ, and by his authority, I therefore declare to you the entire forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the

‡ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

**\* GATHERING HYMN**

“Blessed Assurance”

WOV #699

**\* APOSTOLIC GREETING**

P: The grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

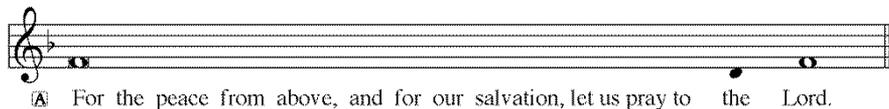
C: **And also with you.**



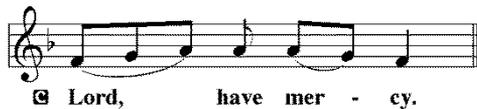
# \* KYRIE



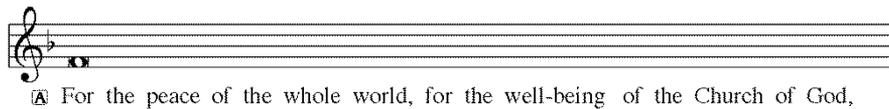
Ⓐ In peace, let us pray to the Lord.    ⓐ Lord, have mer - cy.



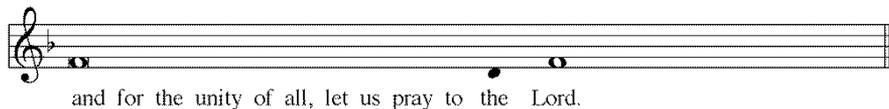
Ⓐ For the peace from above, and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.



ⓐ Lord, have mer - cy.



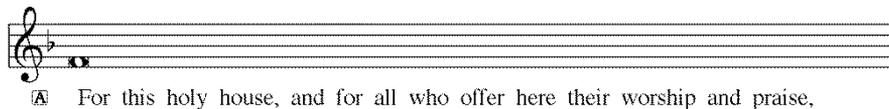
Ⓐ For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God,



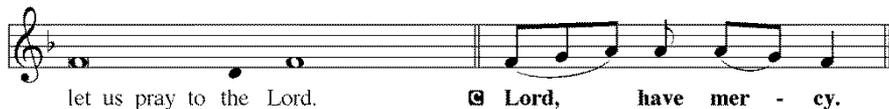
and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.



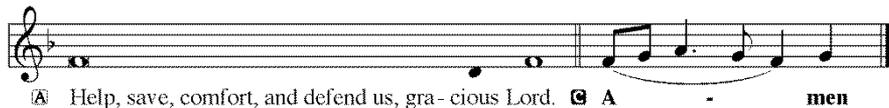
ⓐ Lord, have mer - cy.



Ⓐ For this holy house, and for all who offer here their worship and praise,

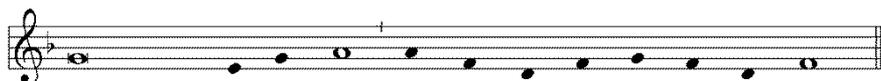


let us pray to the Lord.    ⓐ Lord, have mer - cy.



Ⓐ Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gra-cious Lord.    ⓐ A - men

## \* HYMN OF PRAISE



♩ Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his peo - ple on earth.



♩ Lord God, heav - en - ly king, al - might - y God and Fa - ther:



We wor - ship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glo - ry.



Lord Je - sus Christ, on - ly Son of the Fa - ther, Lord God, Lamb of God:



You take a - way the sin of the world; have mer - cy on us.



You are seat - ed at the right hand of the Fa - ther; re - ceive our prayer.



For you a - lone are the Ho - ly One, you a - lone are the Lord,



you a - lone are the Most High, Je - sus Christ, with the Ho - ly Spir - it,



in the glo - ry of God the Fa - ther. A - men

**\* PRAYER OF THE DAY**

P: The Lord be with you.

C: **And also with you.**

P: Let us pray together.

C: **Holy God, you confound the world's wisdom in giving your kingdom to the lowly and the pure in heart. Give us such a hunger and thirst for justice, and perseverance in striving for peace, that in our words and deeds the world may see the life of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

**WORD**

**FIRST READING: Micah 6:1-8**

*With the mountains and the foundations of the earth as the jury, God brings a lawsuit against Israel. God has "wearied" Israel with a long history of saving acts. God does not want or expect lavish sacrifices to attempt to earn divine favor. Rather God empowers the people to do justice, to love loyalty to God, and to walk shrewdly in God's service.*

<sup>1</sup>Hear what the LORD says:

Rise, plead your case before the mountains,  
and let the hills hear your voice.

<sup>2</sup>Hear, you mountains, the controversy of the LORD,  
and you enduring foundations of the earth;  
for the LORD has a controversy with his people,  
and he will contend with Israel.

<sup>3</sup>"O my people, what have I done to you?

In what have I wearied you? Answer me!

<sup>4</sup>For I brought you up from the land of Egypt,  
and redeemed you from the house of slavery;  
and I sent before you Moses,

Aaron, and Miriam.

<sup>5</sup>O my people, remember now what King Balak of Moab  
devised,

what Balaam son of Beor answered him,  
and what happened from Shittim to Gilgal,  
that you may know the saving acts of the LORD.”

<sup>6</sup>“With what shall I come before the LORD,  
and bow myself before God on high?  
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,  
with calves a year old?

<sup>7</sup>Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams,  
with ten thousands of rivers of oil?  
Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression,  
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?”

<sup>8</sup>He has told you, O mortal, what is good;  
and what does the LORD require of you  
but to do justice, and to love kindness,  
and to walk humbly with your God?

L: Word of God, word of life.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

**PSALM: Psalm 15:1-5** (*read responsively*)

<sup>1</sup>LORD, who may dwell in your tabernacle?

Who may abide upon your holy hill?

<sup>2</sup>**Those who lead a blameless life and do what is right,  
who speak the truth from their heart;**

<sup>3</sup>they do not slander with the tongue, they do no evil to their  
friends;

they do not cast discredit upon a neighbor.

<sup>4</sup>**In their sight the wicked are rejected, but they honor those  
who fear the LORD.**

**They have sworn upon their health and do not take back  
their word.**

<sup>5</sup>They do not give their money in hope of gain, nor do they take  
bribes against the innocent.

Those who do these things shall never be overthrown.

## **SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 1:18-31**

*According to the world's standards of power and might, the message of the cross seems stupid and offensive. Yet this word reveals the paradoxical way God has chosen to work power and salvation through weakness, rejection, and suffering. Hence the message of the cross becomes true wisdom and power for believers.*

<sup>18</sup>The message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. <sup>19</sup>For it is written,

“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,  
and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.”

<sup>20</sup>Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? <sup>21</sup>For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. <sup>22</sup>For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, <sup>23</sup>but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, <sup>24</sup>but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. <sup>25</sup>For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

<sup>26</sup>Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. <sup>27</sup>But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; <sup>28</sup>God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, <sup>29</sup>so that no one might boast in the presence of God. <sup>30</sup>He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, <sup>31</sup>in order that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.”

L: Word of God, word of life.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

**\* GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**



Al - le - lu - ia. Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the  
words of e - ter - nal life. Al - le - lu - ia. Al - le - lu - ia.

**\* GOSPEL: Matthew 5:1-12**

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the fifth chapter.

C: **Glory to you, O Lord.** (*sung*)

*Jesus opens the Sermon on the Mount by naming those who are blessed in the reign of God.*

<sup>1</sup>When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. <sup>2</sup>Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying: <sup>3</sup>“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>4</sup>“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

<sup>5</sup>“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

<sup>6</sup>“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

<sup>7</sup>“Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

<sup>8</sup>“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

<sup>9</sup>“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

<sup>10</sup>“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>11</sup>“Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. <sup>12</sup>Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

P: The gospel of the Lord.

C: **Praise to you, O Christ.** (*sung*)

# SERMON – Pastor David Kistler

*Silence for meditation.*

## HYMN OF THE DAY

### “Let Streams of Living Justice”



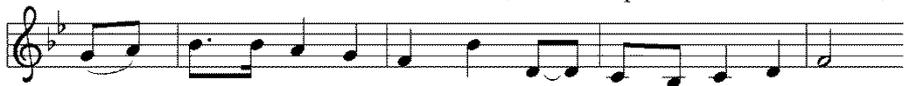
1 Let streams of liv - ing jus - tice flow down up - on the earth;  
2 For heal - ing of the na - tions, for peace that will not end,  
3 Your ci - ty's built to mu - sic; we are the stones you seek;



give free - dom's light to cap - tives, let all the poor have worth.  
for love that makes us lov - ers, God grant us grace to mend.  
your har - mo - ny is lan - guage; we are the words you speak.



The hun - gry's hands are plead - ing, the work - ers claim their rights,  
Weave our var - ied gifts to - geth - er; knit our lives as they are spun;  
Our faith we find in ser - vice, our hope in oth - ers' dreams,



the mourn - ers long for laugh - ter, the blind - ed seek for sight.  
on your loom of time en - roll us till our thread of life is run.  
our love in hand of neigh - bor; our home - land bright - ly gleams.



Make lib - er - ty a bea - con, strike down the i - ron pow'r;  
O great weav - er of our fab - ric, bind church and world in one;  
In - scribe our hearts with jus - tice; your way—the path un - tried;



a - bol - ish an - cient ven - geance; pro - claim your peo - ple's hour.  
dye our tex - ture with your ra - diance, light our col - ors with your sun.  
your truth—the heart of strang - er; your life—the Cru - ci - fied.

Text: William Whitla, b. 1934  
Music: THAXTED, Gustav Holst, 1874–1934  
Text © 1989 William Whitla.

## \* **APOSTLES' CREED**

P: God has made us his people through our Baptism into Christ. Living together in trust and hope, let us confess our faith:

C: **I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.**

**He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit  
and born of the virgin Mary.**

**He suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried.**

**He descended into hell.**

**On the third day he rose again.**

**He ascended into heaven,**

**and is seated at the right hand of the Father.**

**He will come again to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,**

**the holy catholic Church,**

**the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,**

**the resurrection of the body,**

**and the life everlasting. Amen.**

## \* **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

P: Called together to follow Jesus, we pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

*A brief silence.*

P: Cultivate humility in your church. In gatherings of every size, teach us to boast only in the cross. Shape your church to be people of kindness, generosity, and justice. Merciful God,

C: **receive our prayer.**

P: The foundations of the earth bear witness to your faithfulness; the mountains and hills echo with your holiness. When we mistreat your creation, show us the error of our ways. Inspire us with reverent awe to honor all you have made. Merciful God,

C: **receive our prayer.**

P: You make foolish the wisdom of the world. Raise up honorable leaders who seek justice, love mercy, and pursue peace. Frustrate plans that are corrupt, wicked, and self-seeking. Prosper the work of peacemakers. Merciful God,

C: **receive our prayer.**

P: Bless all whom the world rejects. Accompany those who are regarded as foolish, weak, low, and despised; reveal your power and presence at work where it is least expected. Give your life, strength, and wisdom to all in need. We pray especially for Sandsbar, Arlene, Pauline, Lisa, Tina, George, Tim, Jane, Myra, Ruth, and all those we name in our hearts or aloud... Merciful God,

C: **receive our prayer.**

P: As with your people Israel, remind this congregation of your saving acts. Remind us how your faithfulness brought us through difficulties and sustained us despite our weaknesses. Establish the cross as the center of our life together. Merciful God,

C: **receive our prayer.**

P: Praise to you for your blessed saints in every time and place. Trusting you accompanied them in poverty, persecution, and in every trial, we trust you abide with your people always. Merciful God,

C: **receive our prayer.**

P: We thank you, God, for the gift of supply pastors who shepherd our congregation each Sunday. Bless us with patience, wisdom, and guidance as we go through this time of change, and we pray that you would lead us in the right direction as we discern your vision for our future. Merciful God,

C: **receive our prayer.**

P: We bring to you our needs and hopes, O God, trusting your wisdom and power revealed in Christ crucified.

C: **Amen.**

\* **SHARING OF THE PEACE** (*American Sign Language*)

P: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

C: **And also with you.**

P: Let us share a sign of that peace with one another.

## THANKSGIVING

\* **THE LORD'S PRAYER**

P: Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as our Lord Jesus taught us:

C: **Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name,  
thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread;  
and forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us;  
and lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom,  
and the power, and the glory,  
forever and ever. Amen.**

## SENDING

### \* BLESSING

P: May God bless you and keep you, ☩ Jesus grant you grace and truth, and the Spirit send peace upon your hearts, now and forever.

C: **Amen.**

### \* SENDING HYMN

“O Master, Let Me Walk with You”

LBW #492

### \* DISMISSAL

P: Go in peace. Follow the way of Jesus.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

### \* POSTLUDE

“Toccata”

-Johann Krueger

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## **COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS UPDATE:**

**UPDATED WORSHIP GUIDELINES:** If you choose, face masks are no longer required in our building during worship. We respect the decision of those individuals who wish to continue masking. They are encouraged to take the precautions they feel are necessary to protect their health.

**SANCTUARY SEATING:** For your convenience and comfort the sanctuary now has open seating. The pews on the **RIGHT** side will remain taped for those who wish to continue to remain physically distant during worship.

**CONTACTLESS OFFERING** is being practiced. You may place your offering in the plate near the door of the sanctuary; give on-line; or through the mail. Thank you for giving generously as an act of worship and an expression of the fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity and faithfulness. Thank you.

**WELCOME to all who have gathered here for worship this morning!** If you are a visitor to Bern, please sign the guest book in the narthex or fill out the yellow card in the pew rack and place it in the offering plate. We rejoice in the opportunity to worship our Lord together!

**OFFICE HOURS:**

Church Phone: 610-374-4343

Church Email: [bernlutheranchurch@gmail.com](mailto:bernlutheranchurch@gmail.com)

Secretary Korinne: Tuesday—8:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Wednesday—12:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Thursday—8:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

**INCOME TOWARDS EXPENSES:** 1/15/2023 = \$838.00  
1/22/2023 = \$1,117.15

**ATTENDANCE:** 1/15/2023 = 38  
1/22/2023 = 44

**WORSHIP ASSISTANTS AND SPONSORS:**

ORGANIST: Jane Battaglieri

OPENER: Matthew Kasisky

GREETER: Nancy Malandra

LECTOR: Barbara Braucher

ACOLYTE: Jameson Kasisky

ALTAR FLOWERS: Given to the Glory of God in memory of David Braucher by his family.

BULLETINS: Given to the Glory of God by Barry and Terri Shurr in memory of Terri's mother, Helen Blasiol.

## **PRAYER REQUESTS:**

**Members:** Sandsbar and Arlene Ensinger, Pauline Shuman, Lisa Miller, Tina Hissing, George Schaeffer, Tim Moyer, Jane Schaeffer, Myra Bernhart, and Ruth Keeney.

**Family and Friends:** Family and friends of Pastor Paul Hoh, Alex Vasquez, Terry Hine, Claude Davis, Katelyn Hotzman, Jim Maurer, Paul, Sheri Mafeo, Bishop Christopher deForest, Eleanor, Shannon Helms and family, Ann Skinner, Glenva, Warren, Courtney Davis, Giselle Davis, Joanne King, Tim Brown, Robin Brown, Matt DeLeon, Marcia Stoudt, Pastor Joyce Seip, Peter and wife, Bill and Joan Carpenter, Arthur W. Zimmerman, Natalie, Bob Stoner, Ashley Rizzuto, Philip Triantis, Mike, Peggy Deemer, Joe and Karen Young, Brian, Jamie Hey, Glenn Jones, Kailey, Renee Fullmer, Patrick, Susan, Owen Hey, Joyce, Rev. Fred Foerster, Brenda Frey, Lesley Wegman, and Allegheny Lutheran Church in Knauers and Pastor Zach Labagh

*(If you would like to add anyone to our prayer list, please contact Korinne in the church office. Please also notify her of anyone that could be removed.)*

## **WHAT'S ON THE CALENDAR THIS WEEK:**

- Sunday, January 29   ▪ Worship Service, 10:00 a.m.  
- Fourth Sunday after Epiphany  
- Pastor David Kistler
- Friday, February 3   ▪ Frog Pond, 6:00-8:00 p.m.
- Sunday, February 5   ▪ Worship Service, 10:00 a.m.  
- Fifth Sunday after Epiphany  
- Pastor William Fryer  
- "SOUPer" Bowl Food Pantry Collection

**THANK YOU** to Pastor David Kistler for leading us in worship this morning and sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ.

**2023 OFFERING ENVELOPES** are available for pick up on the tables in the hallway. If you are able, please take the envelopes for family members and friends as well to help save on postage. Thank you!

**FOOD PANTRY “SOUPer” BOWL!** – The Confirmation class will be collecting donations for the Food Pantry. On **Sunday, February 5, and Sunday, February 12**, you can donate money or canned soup. Monetary donations can be placed in the large soup pots located in the narthex. The pots will have images of the two teams and you may place your donation in the pot showing the team you think will win. Members of our class will be in the narthex to collect your canned soup donations as well.

**FEBRUARY SIGN-UP SHEETS** – We are in need of Altar Flower and Bulletin sponsors for February 5, 12, 19, and 26. Please sign up on the sheets in the hallway if you are interested in sponsoring any of these items. Altar Flowers are \$35.00/week, Bulletins are \$20.00/week, and our monthly Newsletter is \$40.00/month. Thank you!

### **SCHUYLKILL VALLEY FOOD PANTRY**

**REPRESENTATIVE** – Bern Lutheran Church participates in the Schuylkill Valley Food Pantry distribution two times a year. We are looking for someone who can represent Bern at the committee meetings. If you would be interested, please let Korinne in the church office know either by phone or email. Thank you for your consideration.

**THANK YOU** – I would like to thank all the members for their cards, thoughts and prayers for not only my daughter, Katelyn, but for me as well during her surgery and now recovery. It will be about 3 months for her to completely heal. I am very grateful to have such thoughtful and caring people in my life. – *Korinne Hotzman*



**SERMON ON THE MOUNT**

## UPSIDE-DOWN BLESSING

How do you know that you are blessed? Our consumer-driven culture primes us to believe blessedness is based on our bank accounts. Or perhaps we learn that we are blessed if we are in good health, or if our work is meaningful, or if our social or family lives are fulfilling. Social media hashtags depict blessing as the result of good fortune. And health, work, family, and social connections can all be good things! But the beatitudes turn our assumptions about blessedness on their head.

Jesus reminds us that instead, blessedness is our beginning. “Blessed” is our primary identity in God. We are loved and favored by God before we do anything to earn it, before the circumstances of our lives begin to define us. Our level of blessedness has nothing to do with us and everything to do with God’s abundant love and grace. This is true especially when it feels like we are anything but blessed.

We are loved, held, and brought near to God, even in our pain and sorrow and everything that makes us feel like we are less worthy, less loved, less important. In fact, it is in those places that God draws nearest to us, reminding us that we are loved and whole and worthy of blessing. Then everything we do flows from that identity of blessedness. We are freed to bless others—with our words, our actions, our whole lives. We are invited to engage the world through the upside-down lens of the kingdom of God. We are given new eyes to see God’s presence in this world—not just among the important, the powerful, the popular, and the loud, but among those the world would rather ignore, disregard, or shame.

Whenever the world pronounces condemnation, God declares, “Blessed.” Whenever the world excludes, God welcomes. Whenever the world scorns, mocks, or causes harm, God promises new life in the kingdom of heaven that is ever drawing near.