



DAILY BREAD
LECTIONARY DEVOTIONS
EPIPHANY 4 —YEAR A

INVOCATION

L: In the name of the Father
and of the Son +
and of the Holy Spirit.

G: Amen

PSALM OF THE DAY: PSALM 1

**A: Blessed are they who hope,
who hope in the Lord.**

L: Blessed is the man who does not walk in the
counsel of the wicked

G: or stand in the way of sinners.

L: But his delight is in the law of the LORD,

G: and on his law he meditates day and night.

L: He is like a tree planted by streams of water,
which yield its fruit in season

**G: and whose leaf does not wither.
Whatever he does prospers.**

L: Therefore the wicked will not stand in the
judgment,

**G: nor sinners in the assembly of the
righteous.**

L: For the LORD watches over the way of the
righteous,

G: but the way of the wicked will perish.

**A: Blessed are they who hope,
who hope in the Lord.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

L: Lord God, you know that we are surrounded by
many dangers and that we often stumble and fall.
Strengthen us in body and mind, and bring us safely
through all temptations; through Jesus Christ, your
Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the
Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

READING & MEDITATION *see next page*

PRAYER

LORD'S PRAYER

**A: 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.**

VERSE OF THE DAY

**A: The Spirit of the Lord is on me; he has
anointed me to preach good news.
(Luke 4:18)**

BENEDICTION

L: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ
and the love of God
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with you all.

A: Amen

READING AND MEDITATION:

Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany: The Savior's Sermon: Trust in God's strength! The Beatitudes are hard for us to swallow. Jesus seems to be espousing a Christianity imbued with fatalism at best or defeatism at worst. Look closer, however, and see what he says. The weaker you are, the stronger God is in your life. The weaker you are now, the more ready you are to trust in a future reward. Look at the past acts of God's grace and you will find many reasons to trust his strength in the face of adversity, persecution or sorrow.

As you study this week, seek to find the connecting theme in all the lessons by using Luther's Four Big Barber Questions to ponder and discuss each individual reading:

1. *What is God saying to me in this lesson?*
2. *For what does this lesson lead me to give thanks?*
3. *What sins does this lesson lead me to confess?*
4. *For what does this lesson lead me to pray?*

THE GOSPEL: MATTHEW 5:1-12

In the Beatitudes, our Savior turns the world upside down. He calls blessed the people this world never would. He calls blessed people that the world would use as doormats! The world praises the brash, the strong, and the self-sufficient. Jesus calls blessed what others see as weak or stupid. To live this kind of blessedness requires a deep trust in the Lord's strength and a long-term view of life. Jesus calls us blessed even in circumstances like mourning and persecution, because he is looking beyond the troubles of this world to the reward that is waiting for the people of God. Like reading the last chapter of a book, Jesus takes the mystery out of a life filled with sorrow by showing us the end, the outcome of life lived trusting in God's strength. All the weak children of God can rejoice and be glad—even now—because our reward will be great!

My takeaways:

FIRST LESSON: MICAH 6:1-8

God builds a case against the people of Israel. He calls the mountains as witnesses and lodges a charge against the unfaithful people. Yet look at the grace when he still calls them, "My people!" This faithless and wayward group he still calls his own and reminds them of all his righteous acts from the

Exodus until the crossing of the Jordan (from Shittim to Gilgal). Israel, though, does not respond in faith, but in sinful pride: What *must I do* to make this right (v 6)? No sacrifice from human hands could clear the guilt. The sacrifice God wanted was a broken and contrite heart (Psalm 51:17) that knows its weakness and trusts in the strength of God's saving grace. Then God will give the strength to act justly, to love mercy and walk humbly with our God.

My takeaways:

SECOND LESSON: 1 CORINTHIANS 1:26-31

Paul points the Corinthians to themselves as an example of God's strength made perfect in weakness. The majority of them did not come from the upper crust of society or the ranks of the learned. God, however, chose them. Paul's list of God's chosen ones fits well with Jesus' description of the blessed ones in the Gospel. God chooses the losers of this world, not the winners; he chooses the weak, not the strong, so that there is no doubt as to the nature of his one-sided grace. The weaker we are, the more ready we are to trust in God's strength and boast in the work he does in us.

My takeaways:

SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: DANIEL 3:13-27

Rejoice and be glad, Jesus said, because great is your reward *in heaven*. He does not promise to keep us from a martyr's death or Christian persecution *on earth*. He promises to reward us in spite of them. That we might trust his promises of future reward, however, he shows us his righteous acts of the past. The God of the Three Men in the Fiery Furnace can be trusted! As they stood before great Nebuchadnezzar, these men looked weak. As they chose the path of righteousness rather than accommodation, they seemed stupid. As they spoke about a powerful God, their words and actions seemed powerless. At the weakest moment of their lives—despised, condemned, bound hand and foot and falling into an inferno—they trusted that God was their strength, and he did not fail them.

My takeaways:

What major theme(s) connect(s) all the lessons?