

Fourth Sunday after Epiphany – year A

Preparation

Read [Matthew 5:1-12](#). Pay attention to the words or phrases that jump at you. Read over the lesson so that you are familiar with what is intended to happen. Gather the materials that you will need for each section of the lesson. For deeper thinking or for ways to extend the lesson take a look at the following websites:

<http://www.textweek.com/yeara/epipha4.htm>
http://www.episcopalchurch.org/109452_115820_ENG_HTM.htm
http://www.cyberfaith.com/proclaiming_faith.cfm?id=163
<http://www.sermons4kids.com/happy-puppy.html>
<http://www.msscrafs.com/newtestament/sermononmount.htm>
<http://www.ebibleteacher.com/children/lessons/blessed.htm>
<http://www.sundayschoollessons.com/epi6les.htm>
<http://www.word-sunday.com/Files/a/4-a/A-4-a.html>
<http://www.efree.mb.ca/lectionarypuzzles/in-awjj.htm#ep04>
http://www.daniellesplace.com/html/bible_themes_A-C.html#beatitude

Gathering

Materials needed

- Small table or end of one table
- Candle and candle lighter
- Bible and bookmark
- Green cloth
- Newsprint and markers

Print up the prayer on the newsprint so that the readers can say the prayer with you. Gather around the small table or at the end of one table. With the children place the cloth on the table. Have them help you place the candle and the Bible on the cloth. Light the candle. Pray the following prayer together:

**Learning new things, we walk with God;
Loving new ways, we walk with Jesus;
Looking for hope, we walk with the Spirit. Amen.**

Blow out the candle. Write the word '**Rules**' on a piece of newsprint. Ask the children what rules they have to follow. In point form, make note of them on the newsprint. Now write the word '**Bless**' on the newsprint. Ask the children if they know what this word means – wait for their responses. Explain that to bless is to do something good for someone else. They may have heard people say 'God bless you' after someone sneezes. We say that to make the person feel better. Ask the children if they can come up with other ideas of blessing others – write up their responses on the newsprint. Explain to the children that in today's story they are going to hear a lot about being blessed from Jesus and how we can bless others.

Story Time

Materials

- poster from previous weeks
- people image at the end of the lesson
- scissors
- wall tack or tape

Instructions

- Copy the people image at the end of the lesson and cut it out. Place it near the poster with the wall tack or tape. With the children get comfortable to hear the story.
- Teach the children the following song to the tune of *Row, Row, Row your boat*:

**Bless, bless, bless says Jesus,
Those who live God's way.
We can all be a blessing
If we live God's way.**

Jesus had been travelling all over the Galilee region. He was getting well known by everyone. Lots of people were beginning to follow him. Lots of people wanted to learn from him. When Jesus saw how many people were with him he decided to go up the mountain. His friends came with him. Jesus then began to speak and to teach them all about God's way.

**Bless, bless, bless says Jesus,
Those who live God's way.
We can all be a blessing
If we live God's way.**

Jesus said:

“Blessed are those whose spirits are hurt, for they belong to the kingdom of God.
Blessed are those who are sad, for they will be given God's comfort.
Blessed are those who are gentle and loving, they will be given the earth.”

**Bless, bless, bless says Jesus,
Those who live God's way.
We can all be a blessing
If we live God's way.**

Jesus continued with the blessings and said:

“Blessed are those who want good things for everyone so much
that it feels like being hungry and thirsty all the time,
they will see the kingdom of God do this.
Blessed are those who show understanding and love to others,
for they will be shown understanding and love.
Blessed are those who have pure hearts, for they will see the face of God.”

**Bless, bless, bless says Jesus,
Those who live God's way.
We can all be a blessing
If we live God's way.**

Jesus then said:

Blessed are those who make peace, for they will be called the children of God.
 Blessed are those who get into trouble for working for justice,
 for they belong to the kingdom of God.
 Blessed are you when people hurt you, call you names for my sake.
 Be happy and know that you are a part of the kingdom of God.
 Remember God's followers are often hurt for following God's way of love.

**Bless, bless, bless says Jesus,
 Those who live God's way.
 We can all be a blessing
 If we live God's way.**

Point out the poster to the children. Explain that each week that they are going to add a symbol (an object that reminds us of something) to the poster. Bring out the people image. Ask the children why we put people on for today? To remind us of the people who came to hear Jesus and learn how to follow in God's way. Have one of the children tape it onto the poster on the side of the hill/mountain.

Response

Project Idea 1: Blessing Flowers

We are all called to be blessings in the world. This response will help the children to put this into concrete terms and remember to act as a blessing in the world.

Materials needed

- flower image from end of lesson
- construction paper
- pipe cleaners, craft sticks or drinking straws
- stapler with staples
- scissors
- markers
- yarn

Instructions

Copy the flower image from the end of the lesson. Cut out and then trace on to the construction paper. Make at least six for each child. For younger children you will need to cut them out ahead of time for the children, older children can do this themselves. Give each child their set of flowers, have the older children cut theirs out. Have the children print '**Bless you**' in the centre of the flower. Help them to staple a pipe cleaner to the back of each flower. When they are done give them a length of rain and have them tie the flowers together. Explain to the children that each time they see someone who needs to be blessed by God they are to give them a flower to share that blessing with them.

Project Idea 2: Blessing Bookmarks

A simple bookmark can be a way for the children to share the message of Jesus calling us all to be a blessing for God's world.

Materials needed

- card stock
- markers
- scissors
- yarn
- hole punch
- tissue paper
- glue
- clear contact paper

Instructions

Cut the card stock along the long side into strips that are 8 cm wide. Make one for each child. Print the phrase '**Be a blessing**' down the centre of the strip in bubble letters. Tear up the tissue paper into small pieces. Have the children glue the pieces of tissue paper into the letters of the phrase, so that they become colourful. When they are finished have them cover the bookmark with a piece of clear contact paper. Trim off the excess with the scissors. Punch a hole into the top with a hole punch and then have the children tie a piece of yarn through the hole. Suggest to the children that they give the bookmark to someone they know who is a blessing and invite that person to pass on the bookmark when they find someone else who is a blessing in the world. This way God's blessings will get spread around.

Project Idea 3: Random Acts of Kindness Cards

This activity will be a good one for older children as it gives them a chance to share what they have learned about the Beatitudes in today's lesson.

Materials needed

- card stock
- random acts note from end of lesson
- markers
- scissors
- glue
- anything you think will be good to decorate the cards with

Instructions

Copy the random acts note from the end of the lesson, making sure you have one for each child. Give each child a copy of the list. Before reading them over ask the children if they know what a random act of kindness is – wait for their responses. Explain that it is when someone does something for someone they don't know just because it is a good thing to do. They give the person a blessing without wanting anything in return. If you have an example share that with the children – like letting someone in line ahead of you just because this is a good thing to do. Read over the note together. Explain that they are to keep the cards with them and when they do a random act of kindness they are to pass the card on to the person they did the act for. Have the children glue the note to the card stock and then cut them apart. If they want have them decorate the cards with the markers and other materials set out for them. Encourage the children to share this activity with their parents so that they can be included in this activity.

Closing

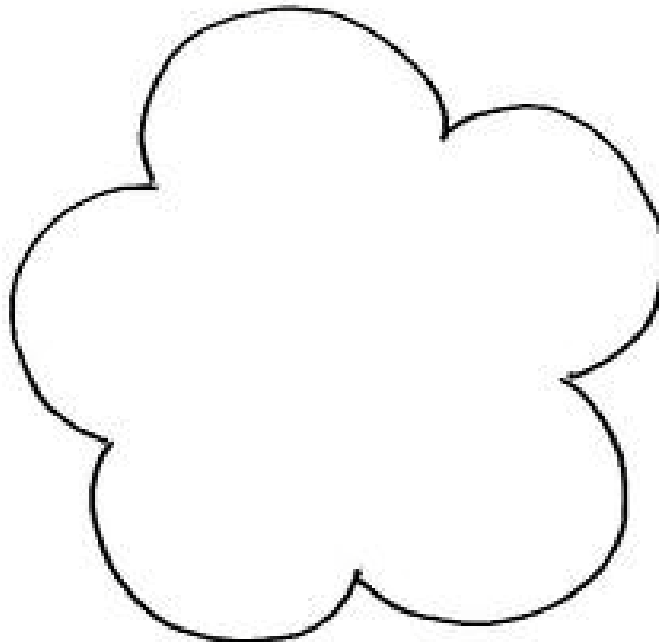
Gather with the children around the worship table again. Relight the candle.
Say the prayer line by line and encourage the children to repeat it after you:

Thank you God for being with us;
Thank you Jesus for loving us;
Thank you Spirit for leading us. Amen.

Image of a group of people



Image of a flower



Random Acts notes

<p>An act of random kindness was done for you. Please take this card and do an act of your own. Then pass the card on to the person you do the action for. Keep the acts of random kindness going.</p>	<p>An act of random kindness was done for you. Please take this card and do an act of your own. Then pass the card on to the person you do the action for. Keep the acts of random kindness going.</p>
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