

Fourth Sunday after Epiphany

February 1, 2026

Faith Lutheran, Okemos

Micah 6:1-8, Psalm 1, I Corinthians 1:18-31, Matthew 5:1-12

Your Kingdom Come, Your Will Be Done, On Earth as in Heaven...

Our Father in heaven, in each moment, in each day we pray your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven.

Your kingdom come, your will be done... I been thinking about our sister congregation, Immanuel Lutheran in Grand Ledge. Their pastor, Chuck Forrester, has been on leave from call for several months because of a serious medical condition. For the last five months, God provided Pastor Chrisy Bright to serve Immanuel. Chrisy, a young pastor, most recently served as an assistant to former Bishop Satterlee, and now for at least the next three months is Immanuel's contracted pastor. In this present moment this morning she is preaching the good news of God's love in Jesus Christ to the people of Immanuel. God provided both work for a gifted pastor now without a letter of call, and pastoral leadership for a congregation whose called pastor's return remains uncertain. An answer to most powerful of all prayers: Your kingdom come, your will be done...

One year ago today, Pastor Megan was ordained, and the very next day, she served as our pastor. Surely, in this moment in the story of Faith Lutheran Church, God provided for us a shepherd abounding in compassion and joy in a time in our society when so much is uncertain.

Both Immanuel and Faith have been blessed too with exceptionally wise lay leaders and brilliant musicians, so reassuring during this past tumultuous, fear-filled year in our country when the foundations of our democracy seem very tenuous. In ways we may not have readily

recognized, our praying the Lord's prayer week after week did not go unheard. In both congregations, in this fragile time for all of us, signs of the kingdom, signs of the reign of our Father and his Son, signs of God's steadfast, faithful, loving presence... We are so blessed.

[In a Zoom call on Wednesday with three other former bishops, Floyd, Marcus, and Jerry, Floyd proclaimed that, for him, these readings for today from Micah, Psalm 15, I Corinthians, and Matthew were maybe the best ones in all of our three-year cycle of biblical texts. Surely, they all are very beautiful and challenging and powerful as such a time as this.]

Many of us know by heart, or have at least heard these famous words from the prophet Micah, plain-spoken words we are called to live out until we take our last earthly breath:

He [God] 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?

Less familiar, but no less powerful and reassuring are the words of Psalm 15, words for each of us in each moment of each day, for all of us who are daily bathed in God's forgiving love. Please read them with me in their entirety: *LORD, who may dwell in your tabernacle...*

[vs.4b: They are willing to do the right thing, to stand by their oath even to their own hurt.]

And then these opening words from I Corinthians 1:18 revealing the seemingly contradictory way God has chosen to save us: *The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us [most of whom are probably not all that worldly wise or powerful] to us who are being saved it is the power of God.* How ludicrous to worldly wisdom and worldly power and might to believe that a man accused of treason, who dies on a cross, would thereby take away the sin of the world. But

it is God's wisdom that Jesus' cruel death would be the very way God would save us from our deep brokenness and alienation from each other and from the One who so loves us, so heals us, so day by day rekindles our faith in and hope and love for our Maker and Redeemer and for our friends and enemies alike.

And then, even more, the beatitudes in Matthew 5 as Jesus sat down and to his disciples long ago and to us this morning began his sermon on the mount.

Hear the beatitudes, these blessings in a translation, a rendering by Steve Garnaas-Holmes, a friend of Pastor Megan's:

*Blessed are you who have nothing to offer,
for you are offered everything.*

*Blessed are you who are broken-hearted for the world,
for God weeps with you, and will rejoice with you.*

*Blessed are you who do not seek to dominate,
for love dominates your life.*

*Blessed are you who sacrifice for the sake of justice,
for you will know victory.*

*Blessed are you who are gentle,
for God's gentleness enfolds you.*

*Blessed are you who seek only love,
for God will be everywhere for you.*

*Blessed are you who remain peaceful in conflict,
for so you reveal God.*

*Blessed are you who are treated harshly,
for God treats you to the entire realm of God.*

*Blessed are you who are punished for your compassion,
for this is the way of the cross.*

These beatitudes are not commands. They are not orders for how we should live our lives. Rather they are promises to us when our spirits are weak and pretty much exhausted, when we mourn the injustices and the acts of violence in words and deeds against our brothers and sisters. The beatitudes are promises that when we hunger for, yearn for, work for respectful, kind, and honest relationships in our own lives and in our communities and in our country, they are promises that already God has begun to fill our hearts with hope. We see God already exposing the abuses of power and the violation of basic human rights so contrary to the way of our gentle Lord, even now calling tens of thousands of protesters to speak up for those who are treated harshly.

“Your kingdom come, your will be done.” It is already coming, our Father’s will already being done. So, blessed are we, members and friends of Faith, when in each moment and each day, the Holy Spirit moves us to perform simple acts of kindness, simple acts of gentleness, simple acts of mercy. Blessed are we when that same Holy Spirit enables us to see injustices to the poor and to boldly resist in words and actions those in power who would crush and destroy the lives of those the Bible calls “resident aliens.” And blessed are we if we “take a hit,” if we are maligned for the simple acts of compassion we are called to take for the oppressed in our midst, the acts of compassion we take for Jesus who was maligned for all of us, who will always be our Immanuel, God with us, God in the very depths of our hearts...

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven... in each of our lives, in each of our hearts, in each of our actions, in each moment of each day. Amen.

JDS

*or “kindom,” the latter word, recently coined and offered in the Apostles’ Creed as an understanding of God’s kingdom as a beloved community of siblings, all of us as beloved sisters and brothers with Jesus as our Lord.