

# THE LIVING WORD OF EPIPHANY

A DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

January 29 - February 4



# FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

As we go through the season of Epiphany, a time when God reveals himself and continues to do so, this week we see Jesus as our teacher. I really appreciate the movement described in the opening verses of Matthew 5. Jesus sees the crowds, goes up on the mountain, and sits down. Please do not miss the shift in who is active afterward—as the disciples draw closer to him. Then Jesus begins to teach.

Are you moving closer to Jesus? Are you seeking his guidance to learn from him? (Thank you for taking the time to be with him now.)

What Jesus starts with is quite surprising, as he quickly shares a series of “blessed are” statements—things we don’t usually associate with the word blessed: the poor in spirit, the meek, the merciful, those who mourn, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, and those who are persecuted. Oh, and there seems to be some kind of hidden blessing when people say evil things about you because of Jesus.

As Jesus teaches the Beatitudes, often called the upside-down Kingdom values, he helps us see life differently by shifting our focus to heaven’s rewards and the life beyond the world we see now, “as his Kingdom comes and his will is done on earth as it is in heaven.” His sit-down talk reflects on what it truly means to be one of his followers, to be an apprentice of Jesus.

As we examine other passages this week, notice that Psalm 15 highlights integrity, which grows in our lives as we stay connected to God. Living close to him helps us remain steady through life’s challenges. Take a moment to thoughtfully reflect on verse 4, which shows how a person with integrity is someone “who keeps an oath even when it hurts and

does not change their mind.” Can others depend on you when you say you’ll do something, or do they wonder whether you’ll follow through?

We learn about true justice—how to pursue it, not deprive others of it, and to offer it generously as God requires: “to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God” (Mic 6:8). We are taught what not to do (respond to evil with evil); instead, we should offer blessings. Also, avoid withholding generosity. We will come to understand that our ability to do this comes through God’s power and wisdom.

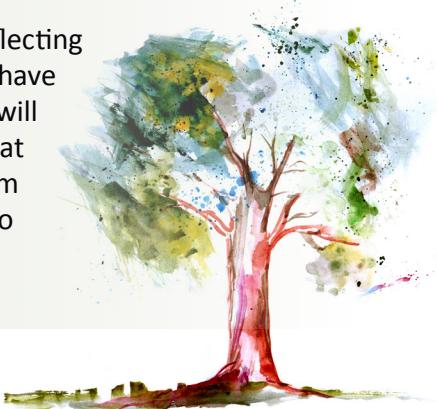
We meet Paul’s dear friend, Onesimus, as they share joy, love, and encouragement through mutual respect and regard. See how genuine relationships refresh our souls.

And we will gain a close look at the upside-down Kingdom values when we study Ruth. Her story is very sad. She was literally poor, hungry, and full of grief, but when we see it through the perspective of time, it becomes the greatest blessing we could receive. Her lineage leads to Jesus!

And Jesus lovingly teaches us as we come closer to him.

## FOR reflection

Read John 13:34-35 slowly, reflecting on Jesus’ new command. How have you received his love? How will you offer it to others? In what ways will you move toward him so Jesus can teach you how to love like him?





# SCRIPTURE

READINGS FOR THE WEEK

**Thursday**

Psalm 15; Deuteronomy 16:18-20; 1 Peter 3:8-12

**Friday**

Psalm 15; Deuteronomy 24:17-25:4; 1 Timothy 5:17-24

**Saturday**

Psalm 15; Micah 3:1-4; John 13:31-35

**Sunday**

Psalm 15; Micah 6:1-8; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31; Matthew 5:1-12

**Monday**

Psalm 37:1-17; Ruth 1:1-18; Philemon 1-25

**Tuesday**

Psalm 37:1-17; Ruth 2:1-16; James 5:1-6

**Wednesday**

Psalm 37:1-17; Ruth 3:1-13; 4:13-22; Luke 6:17-26

## Why do the daily readings begin on Thursday?

The daily readings for each week begin on Thursday and end on the following Wednesday. The Thursday through Saturday readings prepare the reader for the Sunday ahead. The Monday through Wednesday readings reflect on what was presented on Sunday.

# *The Morning Liturgy*

## *Opening Scripture*

Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

*Isaiah 60:1-3*

## *Opening Prayer (based on Psalm 51)*

Open my lips, O Lord, and my mouth shall proclaim your praise. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Give me the joy of your saving help again and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit. Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. *Amen.*

## *Scripture Reading (read Psalm and Gospel text here)*

## *Period of Silence*

## *Confessing Our Faith (Apostles' Creed)*

## *The Lord's Prayer*

## *The Collect (Fourth Sunday after Epiphany)*

*Almighty and everlasting God, you govern all things both in heaven and on earth: Mercifully hear the supplications of your people, and in our time grant us your peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.*

*Amen.*

## A Midday Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your apostles, “Peace I give to you; my own peace I leave with you.” Regard not our sins, but the faith of your Church, and give to us the peace and unity of that heavenly City, where with the Father and the Holy Spirit you live and reign, now and forever. Amen.

## An Early Evening Prayer

Lord Jesus, stay with us, for evening is at hand and the day is past; be our companion in the way, kindle our hearts, and awaken hope, that we may know you as you are revealed in Scripture and the breaking of bread. Grant this for the sake of your love. Amen.

## A Bedtime Confession and Prayer

Most merciful God, we confess that 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. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your name. Amen.

*Visit this place, O Lord, and drive far from it all  
snares of the enemy; let your holy angels dwell  
with us to preserve us in peace; and  
let your blessing be upon us always;  
through Jesus Christ  
our Lord.  
Amen.*





