

NORTH MAIN SERMON FEBRUARY 1, 2026

1 CORINTHIANS 1: 18-31

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.” Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength. Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: “Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord.”

Matthew 5:1-12

Introduction to the Sermon on the Mount

5 Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, ² and he began to teach them. He taught them The Beatitudes when He said:

³ “Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴ Blessed are those who mourn,

for they will be comforted.

⁵ Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.

⁶ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.

⁷ Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.

⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.

⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.

¹⁰ Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹ “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

THE WORD OF GOD.....

The season of Lent is here again only a few short weeks away and, as with so many times before, we find that we are not really ready for this journey of discipleship. So many things claim our lives and prevent us from being ready to take the steps in faith. As we look at our barrier of readiness, help us to remember that Christ is with us, every step of the way. We are not alone. Christ will help lift our hearts and spirits and direct our paths. We have lists of things to do, for all the areas of our lives. Our lives are so time bound and duty bound that we feel imprisoned in them. Now we are challenged by Christ to take a journey of discipleship. We don't feel ready for this journey. We need more time. And we complain about how much we have to do, and we have to remember that what we do is in service, not something to brag about and tell everyone how much we have done. This is the time for us to reset our priorities so that we will be ready to commit our lives in service to our Lord. The first step on the journey, that of readiness, is one of the hardest. We keep thinking that we have forgotten something. God has called each of us on this journey... Do not feel burdened. You will have all that you need. This journey starts with a review of the past and leads to the start of Jesus' Mission on Earth..

The old Testament laws were very explicit: an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. This seems pretty harsh to us now, but even before Exodus 21 stated these things, a person's life might have been demanded not just an eye.. or maybe two eyes. Even today we want to teach people a lesson for doing bad things..they had revenge on their side as a way of making themselves whole. It really did not work then, nor does it actually now. Today we are talking about the Sermon on the Mountain and Jesus stated his instructions which were called the Beatitudes. This text might be titled, "How Jesus Got His Start." These were radical for the times. From these stories, we can learn that Jesus began with a personal decision to be in service, not seek revenge...and here makes the change from the "eye for an eye" attitude.

Last week in our introductory studies, we learned that Jesus had just chosen the twelve to be His Apostles from the group of all of His disciples. Shortly after Jesus chose the apostles, He laid the ground work for the transformation of their characters by preaching the Sermon on the Mount. He clearly taught them what was expected of them if they were to continue to be his disciples. He stressed the personal characteristics they would have to develop, their relationship to God, and their relationships to their fellow man. The beatitudes give us a glimpse into the character Jesus expected in His followers, His true disciples, members of His family, citizens of the Kingdom of God! The Beatitudes are for all Christians in all ages. Blessed are the meek. One of the meekest men in history was John the Baptist. He was such a powerful figure that Josephus, the great Jewish historian, reports many years later when John's name was mentioned people still trembled at the thought of him. Yet when he saw the Christ, instead of giving a speech about his own great accomplishments, he sent his disciples to Jesus telling them, "He must increase but I must decrease. There are few of us these days who can actually say that. The Sermon on the Mount stands as the clearest proclamation of the Kingdom of God and the heart of Jesus's teachings in this regard.

What we could do if we think the Beatitudes are too cumbersome for us. What we could do is think back to our childhood. We can all think back to the book...*All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten* - that summed it up best:

" Wisdom was not at the top of the mountain, but it is there in the sandpile of Sunday School. These are the things we should have learned:

Share everything. Play fair. Don't hit people. Put things back where you found them. Clean up your own mess. Don't take things that aren't yours. Say you're sorry when you hurt somebody. Wash your hands before you eat. Warm cookies and cold milk are good for you. Live a balanced life - learn some and think some and draw and paint and sing and dance and play and work every day some.

Take a nap every afternoon. When you go out into the world, watch out for traffic, hold hands, and stick together. Be aware of wonder.

Remember the little seed in the Styrofoam cup, the ones we always learned to grow each Spring: the roots go down and the plant goes up and nobody really knows how or why, but we are all like that. Everything you need to know is in there somewhere."

Commitment is a big word that means to decide to do something. Jesus made a big decision. When we make a covenant with God, we can remember others who made a covenant. The idea of our covenant relationship with God is a major motif in the Scriptures.

- God made a covenant with Abraham.
- God made a covenant with Israel at Mount Sinai, where he gave them the Ten Commandments.
- God had his prophet Jeremiah promise a new covenant.
- God in Christ said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood" when he instituted the Lord's Supper in the Upper Room

God made the rainbow a symbol not of destruction but of deliverance. It was to be a reminder of his gracious covenant with Noah and with us. The rainbow reminds us of divine mercy: The rescue of Noah's family from the flood was an act of divine grace. God saved a family and the ark became a symbol of divine mercy and salvation. Today many of us lose sight of our precious Scriptural understanding that the rainbow represents God's sacred promise to never destroy the world. The early church did not initially use the cross as a symbol of their faith. The humiliation of Jesus' public execution was too fresh in their memories. Instead, early Christian art often depicted the ark. It stood for the church and salvation for those within it, by faith. By the ark God gave the human race a second chance, even as the gospel gives us the opportunity for redemption. As Lent begins in a few weeks, let the rainbow and Noah's ark symbolize our

gracious God and his covenant promises. Lent is a time of soul-searching in light of the truth of the gospel. It is all about knowing whose we are and allowing that knowledge expression in all that we do. Today, as we approach the Lenten season we should be pondering what we can add to our lives not giving up something. When we see a rainbow now, we can let it be a reminder of our covenant-keeping God and His indescribable beauty. It can be a reminder to us also that the heart and soul of Jesus is to love one another and forgive each other in his name .. and when we do this we are able to find healing.