

ECUMENICAL THANKSGIVING SERVICE 2015, St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Middleburgh, NY



When Jesus saw the crowds he went up on the mountainside.
After he had sat down his disciples gathered around him, & he began to teach them.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, the reign of God is theirs.

Blessed are they who mourn, then shall be consoled.

Blessed are the meek, the gentle, they shall inherit the land.

Blessed are they who hunger & thirst for holiness, they shall be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, they shall receive mercy.

Blessed are the pure of heart, the single hearted, they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, they shall be called the sons and daughters of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for holiness' sake, the reign of God is theirs.

Blest are you when they insult you & persecute you
& utter every kind of slander against you because of me.

Be glad & rejoice, for your reward is great in heaven;
they persecuted the prophets before you in the very same way.

You are the salt of the earth. But what if salt goes flat? How can you restore its flavor? Then it is good for nothing but to be thrown out & trampled under foot.

"You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden. You do not light a lamp & then put it under a bushel basket. No, you set it on a stand where it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, your light must shine before the world, so that they may see goodness in your acts & give glory to your heavenly Father." [Matthew 5:1-16]

Choral Anthem: Children of the Light [Words by Bert Stratton, Music by Vicki Tucker Courtney]

♪♪ Jesus is the light; beacon burning bright. Jesus is a pure and holy flame.
Jesus is the Son [Sun]. Shining on everyone. We are saved by rays of perfect grace.
We are the children of the light. We are the ones who follow Christ. We know He guides us to everlasting life.
We walk with Jesus night and day. We let our Savior lead the way. We are the children of the light.

Jesus is the lamp keeping us on the path. His eternal truth will set us free.
Jesus is the Word, hope for all the world; we reflect His love for all to see.

We are the children of the light. We are the ones who follow Christ.
We know He guides us to everlasting light. We walk with Jesus night and day. We let our Savior lead the way.
We are the children of the light. We are the children of the light. ♪♪

THE MESSAGE


Peter

We are here to give thanks that Jesus is the Light & that he has blessed each of us
& all of us with life, love & connection with each other & with God.

But those gifts have consequences -


if we are blessed & gifted with the light of life, the light of love, the light of Christ,
we are called to share that life, to pass that love on, to let that light shine.

The anthem sung by the choir is one way of expressing the meaning of the Sermon on the Mount.
The Gospel passage we just heard is the beginning of that summary of the teaching of Jesus. It
has been set to music in many ways. This is one of them:

Peter&Anna  *Blessed are they who are **poor in spirit**, theirs is the kingdom of God
Bless us, O Lord, make us **poor in spirit**, bless us, O Lord, our God.*

We are the **light of the world**, may our **light** shine before all
That they may see the good that we do & give glory to God.

*Blessed are they who **bring peace among us**, they are the children of God.
Bless us, O Lord, may **your peace be with us**; bless us, O Lord, our God.*

We are the **light of the world**, may our **light** shine before all
That they may see the good that we do & give glory to God. 

Jesus said - "**You** are the light of the world!" There is a double meaning here because *you* can mean
one individual, but it can also mean a whole community.

In Greek & Aramaic, the word for **you** that Jesus used—is plural— like "**Y'all**" is in the South.

But it still applies to each one of us as individuals. So -- is it about me or about us?

.....And the answer is - **YES** - it is about *both*! Together and as individual disciples
We are the light of the world! That is a great reason to give thanks today.

But our thanksgiving is not complete until we **do** what the anthem sings about
—until we **walk** as **Children of the Light**. The gift of being **Children of the Light** is a **call** to be
instruments of **peace**, -of **justice**, -of **freedom** -in our families, communities & the entire world.

We are called to let our light shine by feeding the hungry, visiting the sick and caring for the
excluded; by welcoming the stranger & being good stewards of the earth itself. Then, our lives will
sing another song:

 "If all the world were peaceful now, & forevermore.

Peaceful at the surface & peaceful at the core.

Then all the joy within my heart would be so free to soar.

And we're living on a living planet, circling a living star.

I don't know where we're goin', but I know were goin' far.

And we can change the universe by bein' who we are..." 

[Living Planet by Jay Mankita]

Anna In the Gospel reading we heard, Jesus uses the present tense when he says, "You **ARE** the **light of the world**". It is a gift **already** given. We do **not** have a choice about it.

—Our **only** choice is whether we will let it shine **or** hide it under a bushel.—

And how do we share it? By living the Beatitudes — which are a summary of the entire Gospel

They're **not** always easy to **accept**, to **understand** & to **live**

—**but** you know what they **mean** & how to **live** them, **if** you **know**, the prayer we call the **Our Father** because...**in a way**, The Lord's Prayer is the **Readers'-Digest-condensed-version** of the Beatitudes.

The **BEATITUDES** are —*different* facets of **one diamond**,—*different* strands of **one web**—the **TEACHINGS** of **JESUS**Which one is your **favorite**?Which one **scares** you?

~If I live **ONE** of the **Beatitudes** fully, I am probably living the **REST** as well.

~If you know the **Lord's Prayer**, you know the **Beatitudes**

~ If you **understand** & are **living** the **Lord's Prayer**, you are **living** the **Beatitudes**.

How do we live as the **Children of God** we are? —We are compassionate —We put *God* & others first.

We admit that we need *God* in our lives, & we need each other to follow *God's* call.

We let the attitudes of Jesus (described in the **beatitudes**) transform who we are & what we do.

We live conscious that **every** person, **every** thing, **every** minute we have in our lives is **GIFT**.

Some businesses are even realizing that living these attitudes are not only good for people, they are good for business as well.

Living these values could be the best way to save humanity & the earth itself.

The end of the Gospel reading is about our call to be **SAINTS**,

—those who lived as Jesus did to **be** the **Light of the World**.

Once we meet Jesus at the **WELL OF BAPTISM** & have been invited to become His Disciples,

we no longer have a choice **if** we will share the **LIFE & LIGHT** we received. **Our only choice** is '**HOW**' will I do it?

As Jesus said in his 1st sermon at Nazareth "You are sent to bring glad tidings to be **ministers** of our **God witnesses** of the **Gospel**!"

Today we would say we're called to recognize how we've been gifted & to pay it forward.

We are **ALL** called to be **evangelists** — someone who makes a **verb** of the "**Good News**," the **Gospel** —> the **Beatitudes**

That's how we live as an **evangelist** someone who "**GOODNEWS-ES**" others ~ who lives the way Jesus did as a **Child of Light**

Peter As we heard in the anthem earlier in this service:

♪ " Jesus is the *lamp* keeping us on the path. His *eternal truth* will set us *free*.
Jesus is the *Word*, hope for all the world; we reflect *His love* for all to see.

Anna We are the **Children of the Light**. We are the ones who follow *Christ*.

We know He guides us to everlasting *light*.

Peter We walk with Jesus night and day. We let our Savior lead the way.

Peter & Anna ♪ We are the **Children of the Light**. We are the **Children of the Light**. ♪