

Biblical Background

MATTHEW 5:1-12

GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING: Jesus is in Galilee outside by Peter's home, situated in the hills of a natural amphitheater that is perfect for great acoustics. This site would have been chosen by Jesus in the early morning hours when the winds are calm. In the afternoon, the same setting would carry his voice away from the assembled crowd who would fill the natural amphitheater on the hillside.

TERMS: **Blessed** This word should be translated as Honor in this context. The Middle East is an honor and shame culture - gain honor, avoid shame. Jesus is preaching to the hearts of the audience. He wants them to know they will be honored by God and himself if they respond to this preaching.

Meek When used in a positive way, meek describes someone who shows patient restraint. The positive sense of meek implies that someone is able to remain calm and subdued even when being provoked. Moses was called the meekest of men because he kept his great strength under control. That is the kind of person Jesus is looking for as a disciple.

Persecution The disciples are warned that they will be persecuted, like the prophets of old. All of the prophets died as martyrs. This will also be the fate of eleven of the twelve Apostles.

CULTURAL INSIGHT: Jesus is seated. This is a position of honor in the Middle East. Moses sat when he taught, and Jesus is presenting himself as the new Moses. Typically, the teacher is seated and the students stand. This event is in the morning. No easterly winds would blow Jesus' words beyond those who were listening. The fisherman and fishing industry workers worked all night. They had time in the morning to listen to Jesus teachings. This was after work hours for them.

INSIGHTS INTO MEANING: This material is difficult to teach. Here Jesus speaks in the language of metaphors and examples, as he tries to stir hearts and connect with a huge group of diverse individuals. One or more of these statements will hit the mark and change a life. Which one is it for you?

Family Activities

SHARING THE MISSION AT HOME
AND IN THE WORLD



QUESTION OF THE WEEK: How does help from heaven come down to earth? Learn about how rain makes rainbows, and think about how can we apply that idea to God's ways. How can we stay hopeful of God's promises during the hard times in life? How can we share this hope with others? How might we build rainbows of heaven to earth?

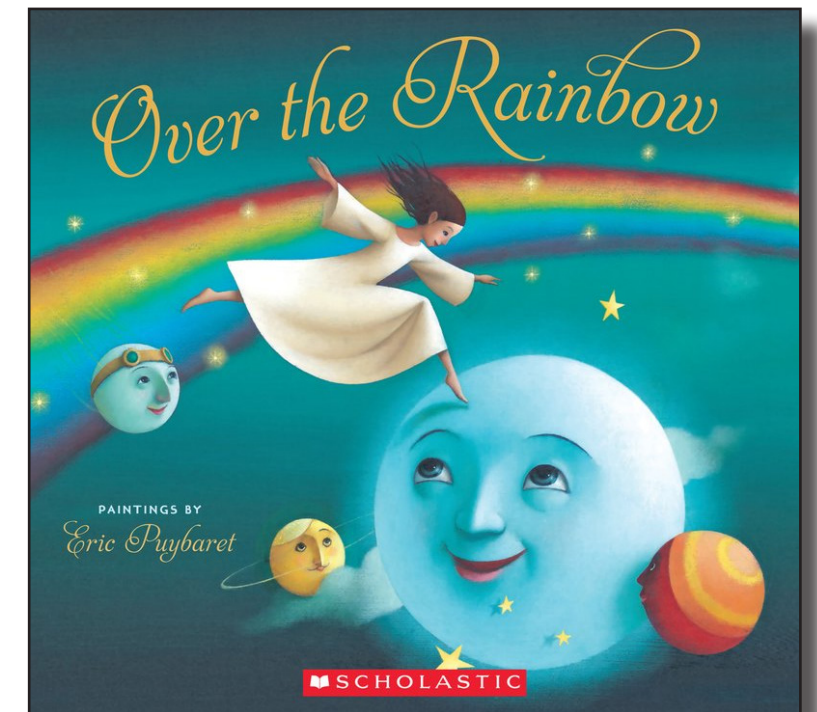
GOSPEL CHARACTER QUALITIES: RESILIENCY
KINGDOM BUILDER

FAMILY ACTIVITIES: Research Catholic organizations in your area that serve marginalized populations, such as the homeless or disabled. Find out how you can volunteer together as a family. Invite other families to go with you, and discover together how you might become involved.

Cycle A 4th Sunday
Ordinary Time

Living Grace

"BIRDS FLY OVER THE RAINBOW - WITH THE
BEATITUDES - SO CAN I!"



In *Over the Rainbow*, we discover that "When all the world is a hopeless jumble, and the raindrops tumble all around, Heaven opens a magic lane. When all the clouds darken up the skyway, there's a rainbow highway to be found, Leading from your window pane to a place behind the sun, just a step beyond the rain." We may not immediately recognize these words, but you definitely know and love the song to which they belong. This is the introductory verse to "Over the Rainbow," sung by Judy Garland in *The Wizard of Oz*. Although she actually recorded these opening lyrics, they were never used in the film. These lyrics and beautiful illustrations take us from a little red farmhouse up over the rainbow, into the sky where bluebirds fly, and castles rise high in the clouds, and beyond.

Art & Faith

CELEBRATING THE BEAUTY & TRADITION
OF SACRED ART



WONDERS BY THEIR HANDS
Mural by Unknown Artist ~ early 21st century
Sydney, Australia

EXPLORING THE ART:

It is usually unsanctioned artwork executed outside of traditional art venues. The term "street art" is often used to distinguish modern public-space artwork from traditional graffiti and the overtones of gang territoriality and vandalism associated with it. Common forms and media include spray paint, stencil graffiti, wheat-pasted poster art, sticker art, street installations, and sculpture. Video projection and yarn bombing have also gained some popularity near the turn of the 21st century.

Street art is immersed in our environment - not hidden away in museums or galleries. It is usually bold and impactful, in your face - even when you are not expecting it - on your way to work, shopping, going about your daily activities.

As with much street art, we don't know the artist of the mural above, and therefore we don't know the artist's intent, so the interpretation is left up to us. It might remind us of the image of the hands of Adam and God by Michelangelo in the Sistine Chapel. It can also represent a helpless child reaching up to get help from a stronger grownup. We may also interpret the upper hand reaching down to lift up or help someone else in need with the doves representing the Holy Spirit flowing through this act of human kindness, comfort, and love. Ultimately, this also represents what Jesus teaches us - the promise of God - that he will always be there to come to our aid, lift us up, and lead the way with mercy and justice.

GOD IN OUR MIDST

Sunday Gospel

MATTHEW 5:1-12

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain,
and after he had sat down, his disciples came to him.

He began to teach them, saying:

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

Blessed are they who mourn,
for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the land.

Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be satisfied.

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

Blessed are the clean of heart,
for they will see God.

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

Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you
and utter every kind of evil against you falsely because of me.

**Rejoice and be glad,
for your reward will be great in heaven."**

Read-aloud video link:

OVER THE RAINBOW

Lyrics by Yip Harburg & Paintings by Eric Puybaret

Making the Connections

FOR ADULTS

SOMEWHERE OUT THERE - AND SOMEWHERE WITHIN US - A GREATER REALITY BREAKS THROUGH.

Jesus says to us in the Beatitudes, blessed (or other translations say happy) are the poor, those that mourn, and the meek. This seems to set us up for our stance before God. For happiness, we must learn to rely on God. This is heaven's way. During times of loss and mourning, our hearts are broken open. We learn that we can rely totally on God for our very next steps in life. The promise of Jesus when we find ourselves poor, mourning, and meek is that we will be in the Kingdom of God. We will be comforted (another name for the Holy Spirit is the Comforter), and we will inherit the land. The land is heaven, the Kingdom will be ours.

In the Beatitudes, Jesus cuts under all of our misconceptions of what brings happiness in this life and invites us into a greater meaning and purpose. He introduces us to a new value system. Living within this new value system, helps us to understand the greater reality. Happy you will be, when you hunger and thirst for righteousness, when you aren't satisfied with the status quo. Happy you will be, when you choose not to be seen with the most popular kid at school, but walk with the person with a disability. Joy will be yours. Blessed are those of you who are made fun of for not fitting into the values of this world. Pray for those that put others down. Instead of fighting back, point them in the direction of the heavens, the direction of the Beatitudes.

When the world "is a hopeless jumble and the raindrops fall", look to the heavens. That will open up a magic lane. We will find comfort and the promise of a way through the dark times. In the rainbow, God promises his people that the world will never flood again. This beautiful magical highway speaks of God's covenantal love of his people. It's a highway that touches heaven to earth and earth to heaven.

The Beatitudes build a bridge in our hearts and our lives bringing heaven to earth. Birds fly over the rainbow, and with the Beatitudes, we can fly over any difficult set of circumstances and find blessing. Yes, birds can fly and so can !!!!!

Making the Connections

FOR CHILDREN

YOUR STORY: Name what makes a bad day as a kid? Have you had those days when it seems everything goes wrong? What is an example of a negative way to handle a bad day like that? Based on this Gospel reading, what advice do you think Jesus would give us to handle a bad day?

THE CHILDREN'S STORY: In the Wizard of Oz does Dorothy have a bad day? What happens to her as a result of her bad day? Is it easy for her and her new friends? What do they learn from all they go through? When she gets back to Kansas does she come back with all kinds of new qualities? How did she get them?

THE GOSPEL STORY: In listening to the words of Jesus in the Beatitudes, and the words of the song, Over the Rainbow, how can you apply those lessons to your bad days Can you turn your bad days into making you a better person? Does Dorothy and her friends do this?

These stories tell us birds fly over obstacles, and rain makes rainbows, God gives us grace, strength and beauty, if we are open to receive it magic and miracles can take place. Can we receive God's help? Is that the real challenge of the beatitudes?