

**The Lutheran Church of the Covenant**  
*“Reaching Out, Reflecting Christ, Renewing Lives”*

*Beautiful Savior*



*Fourth Sunday after Epiphany*  
*January 29, 2023*



**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

God's work. Our hands.



We welcome you to worship here at the Lutheran Church of the Covenant! Here are a few notes to make you feel more at home as we praise this God of new life together!

- Bulletins and Communion (wheat or gluten-free wafers, wine or grape juice options) are available to be picked up at the back of the sanctuary.
- Portions marked with \* are when we invite you to stand as you are able to do so.
- We encourage you to participate throughout the worship by speaking the **bold** print and singing along with the hymns!
- There will not be a separate time for an offering, so a basket is placed in the back for those who wish to support our local ministry as well as the wider church.
- We will commune from our respective seats, where the presiding minister will invite you to open your respective cups with the Communion elements. We believe this meal is for everyone who wishes to partake, regardless of church affiliation or lack thereof. This tangible gift of God's love is meant for the world to enjoy!

### ***Our Worship Leaders & Staff***

Ministers  
Presiding Minister  
Organist  
Lector  
Instrumentalists  
  
Parish Administrator  
Custodian

All People  
The Rev. Bradley Ross  
Robin Crawford  
Ted Lockmiller  
United Handbell Choir  
Ann Droste, Flutist  
Jennifer Lasher-Dobush  
Vince Besednjak

*The Lutheran Church of the Covenant  
19000 Libby Rd., Maple Heights, OH 44137  
Phone: 216-662-0370  
Email: [covenantlc@sbcglobal.net](mailto:covenantlc@sbcglobal.net)  
Website: [covenantmaplehts.org](http://covenantmaplehts.org)*

## **Fourth Sunday after Epiphany**

*Who are the blessed ones of God? For Micah, they are those who do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God. For Paul, they are the ones who find wisdom in the weakness of the cross. For Jesus, they are the poor, the meek, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, those who mourn, and those who hunger for righteousness. In baptism we find our blessed identity and calling in this countercultural way of living and serving.*

Prelude *I Wonder as I Wander* (Moklebust)

Welcome & Greetings

\*Thanksgiving for Baptism

*We praise God for the gift of baptism that forever unites us through God's love with one another, and sets us free to serve as disciples for the sake of the world God still cherishes.*

Joined to Christ in the waters of baptism,  
clothed with God's mercy and forgiveness,  
let us give thanks for the gift of baptism.

Holy God, fountain of living water,  
source of mercy, tender and mighty,  
you are clothed with majesty and splendor.  
Your steadfast love fills the earth.

Your love flows through water,  
satisfying the thirst of all living things,  
sustaining life in our communities we call home,  
nourishing and delighting us.  
We bless you for all the gifts of water surrounding us.  
Your love flows through the water of baptism  
joined to your life-giving Word:  
your well of mercy and cleansing flood,  
your sea of deliverance from death into life,

your healing river washing any sin away,  
your living water springing up to eternal life.

O God, you are the Ocean, sustaining this earth.  
O God, you are the River, saving us from death.  
O God, you are the Fountain, granting us health and well-being.

Continue to shower us all with new life.  
Fill us with your love.  
Clothe us, and all your precious children, with your never-ending grace.  
Embolden us to do justice.  
Bless us to love mercy.  
O God, guide us to walk humbly with you,  
whom we thank and praise, through Jesus Christ,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, now and forever.  
**Amen!**

\*Gathering Hymn     *Rejoice Ye Pure in Heart*

ELW #873

\*Greeting

The grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all! **And also with you.**

Canticle of Praise

ELW pg. 140

Prayer of the Day

Gracious God, you stun the world's wisdom in giving your kingdom to all your precious children. Give us such a hunger and thirst for justice, and perseverance in striving for peace, that in our words and deeds the world may see the life of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen!**

*With the mountains and the foundations of the earth as the jury, God brings a lawsuit against Israel. God has “wearied” Israel with a long history of saving acts. God does not want or expect lavish sacrifices to attempt to earn divine favor. Rather God empowers the people to do justice, to love loyalty to God, and to walk shrewdly in God’s service.*

<sup>1</sup>Hear what the LORD says:

Rise, plead your case before the mountains,  
and let the hills hear your voice.

<sup>2</sup>Hear, you mountains, the controversy of the LORD,  
and you enduring foundations of the earth;  
for the LORD has a controversy with his people,  
and he will contend with Israel.

<sup>3</sup>“O my people, what have I done to you?  
In what have I wearied you? Answer me!

<sup>4</sup>For I brought you up from the land of Egypt,  
and redeemed you from the house of slavery;  
and I sent before you Moses,  
Aaron, and Miriam.

<sup>5</sup>O my people, remember now what King Balak of Moab devised,  
what Balaam son of Beor answered him,  
and what happened from Shittim to Gilgal,  
that you may know the saving acts of the LORD.”

<sup>6</sup>“With what shall I come before the LORD,  
and bow myself before God on high?  
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,  
with calves a year old?

<sup>7</sup>Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams,  
with ten thousands of rivers of oil?  
Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression,  
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?”

<sup>8</sup>He 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?

Word of God, word of life! **Thanks be to God!**



<sup>20</sup>Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? <sup>21</sup>For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. <sup>22</sup>For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, <sup>23</sup>but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, <sup>24</sup>but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. <sup>25</sup>For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

<sup>26</sup>Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. <sup>27</sup>But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; <sup>28</sup>God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, <sup>29</sup>so that no one might boast in the presence of God. <sup>30</sup>He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, <sup>31</sup>in order that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

Word of God, word of life!

**Thanks be to God!**

\*Gospel Acclamation

Al - le - lu - ia. Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the  
words of e - ter - nal life. Al - le - lu - ia. Al - le - lu - ia.

\*Gospel

Matthew 5:1-12

*Jesus opens the Sermon on the Mount by naming those who are blessed in the reign of God.*

The Gospel according to Matthew, the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter.

**Glory to you, O Lord!**

<sup>1</sup>When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. <sup>2</sup>Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

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

<sup>4</sup>“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

<sup>5</sup>“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

<sup>6</sup>“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

<sup>7</sup>“Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

<sup>8</sup>“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

<sup>9</sup>“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

<sup>10</sup>“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>11</sup>“Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. <sup>12</sup>Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

This is the holy Gospel of our Lord!

**Praise to you, O Christ!**

Sermon

Hymn of the Day    *Beautiful Savior*

ELW# 838



\*Apostles Creed

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ,  
God's only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.  
On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

\*Prayers of Intercession

Called together to follow Jesus, we pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

*A brief silence.*

Cultivate humility in your whole church. In gatherings of every size, teach us to boast only in the cross. Shape all communities of faith to be people of kindness, generosity, and justice. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

The foundations of the earth bear witness to your faithfulness; the mountains and hills echo with your holiness. When we mistreat your creation, show us the error of our ways. Inspire us with reverent awe to honor all you have made. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

You make foolish the wisdom of the world. Raise up honorable leaders who seek justice, love mercy, and pursue peace. Frustrate plans that are corrupt, wicked, and self-seeking. Prosper the work of peacemakers. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Bless all whom the world rejects. Accompany those who are regarded as weak, low, and despised; reveal your power and presence at work where it is least expected. Give your life, strength, and wisdom to all in need. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

As with your people of generations past, remind our Covenant family of your saving acts. Help us to remember how your faithfulness brought us through difficulties and sustained us despite our weaknesses. Continue to establish the cross as the center of our life together. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Praise to you for your blessed saints in every time and place. Trusting you accompanied them in poverty, persecution, and in every trial, we trust you abide with your people always. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

We bring to you our needs and hopes, O God, trusting your wisdom and power revealed in Christ crucified. **Amen!**

\*Sharing of the Peace

The peace of Christ be with you always!  
**And also with you.**

Music Interlude *Now the Silence* (Schalk)

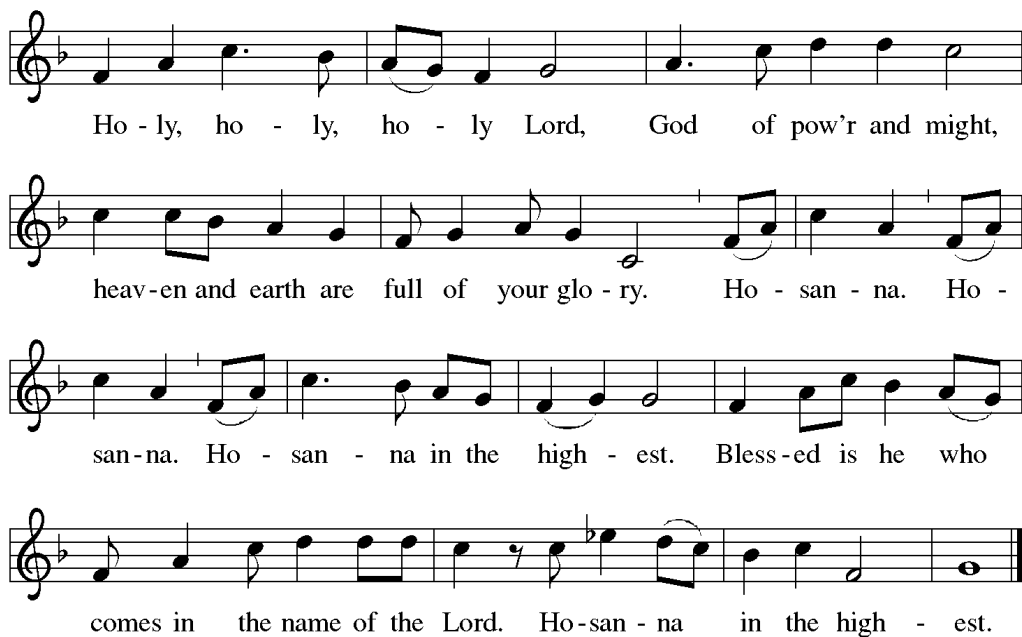
\*Great Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you. And al - so with you.  
Lift up your hearts. We lift them to the Lord.  
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.  
It is right to give our thanks and praise.

The image shows four staves of musical notation in G major (one flat) and 4/4 time. Each staff contains a melody line with lyrics underneath. The first staff has two measures: 'The Lord be with you.' and 'And al - so with you.'. The second staff also has two measures: 'Lift up your hearts.' and 'We lift them to the Lord.'. The third staff has one long measure: 'Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.'. The fourth staff has one long measure: 'It is right to give our thanks and praise.'. The notes are mostly quarter notes with some eighth notes, and there are slurs under the lyrics 'with you.', 'Lift up your hearts.', 'to the Lord our God.', and 'to give our thanks and praise.'.

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy,  
that we should at all times and in all places  
give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God,  
through our Savior Jesus Christ.

By the leading of a star he was shown forth to all nations;  
in the waters of the Jordan you proclaimed him your beloved Son;  
and in the miracle of water turned to wine he revealed your glory.  
And so, with all the choirs of angels,  
with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven,  
we praise your name and join their unending hymn:



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow'r and might,  
 heav-en and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho - san - na. Ho -  
 san-na. Ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless-ed is he who  
 comes in the name of the Lord. Ho-san - na in the high - est.

\*Thanksgiving at the Table

Almighty Lord,  
 we praise your shining light, your glowing grace.  
 From before the earth's foundation,  
 you loved us and promised us life forever.  
 Within the earth's deep struggle,  
 we laud your great and glorious might.  
 Despite our tears and shortcomings,  
 we sing of the gladness of your mercy.

We praise your Son, our Morning Star,  
 our treasure dear.  
 He is our living Savior who has redeemed us in love.  
 He keeps us yours and fails us never—  
 today, tomorrow, and every day.

For on the night he was betrayed,  
our Lord Jesus took bread and gave thanks,  
broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:  
Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.  
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,  
and gave it for all to drink, saying:  
This cup is the new covenant in my blood,  
shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.  
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Holy Spirit, refresh our souls with this heavenly food.  
Nourish us as branches of your tree,  
and enlighten us with your undying flame.

We sing out to the Father, we ring out to the Son,  
we exult in the Holy Spirit.  
Empower us in our yearning,  
and be for us the end and the beginning,  
our purest pleasure, our victorious crown, our never-ending love.  
And so, we pray and praise: **Amen!**

**Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those  
who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours,**

**now and forever. Amen.**

\*Invitation to Communion

Glory to God in the highest!

Taste the joy of Christ, our Lord!

**Thanks be to God!**

Communion

Music Interlude *Canzona* (Bertoni)

\*Prayer after Communion

O Lord, you look upon us in love and refresh our souls  
through the gifts of bread and wine.

Send us out, reflecting the light of your grace,  
to tell the story of Jesus Christ,  
our bright morning star. **Amen!**

Blessing for Robin Crawford

“For everything there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to seek, and a time to lose.” (Ecclesiastes 3:1-6)

Our beloved Robin Crawford is entering her time of retirement. Today, therefore, it is a time to mark the ending of her ministry here at Covenant: a time to look back, and a time to look forward; a time for sadness, and a time for joy. It is a time to give thanks and praise to Almighty God for what Robin has given us in our lives together.

The Lord makes everything beautiful in its time.  
**Whatever God does endures forever.**

Bless the Lord, O my soul.  
**And forget not all God's benefits.**

Bless the Lord, all you hosts:  
**You servants who reveal God's beauty of new life.**

For everything there is a season; a time to go, and a time to come. The Lord has blessed us with years of wonderful service by God's precious child in Robin Crawford. She has been our organist, our co-worker in Christ, our inspiration, our friend. With sadness and joy, we mark and celebrate the ending of her pivotal ministry with us.

Robin, we called you to be our leader in music: to share your talents and gifts, to empower and lead our worship, to assist us in our service of praise and thanksgiving, and to give us a glimpse of the beauty and glory of God.

So, as you have been a blessing to us, may you still be a blessing to others. Continue to witness the boundless love of God in whatever you do. May God, the Father, bless you in your rest and renewal. May God, the Son, be ever with you and guide you. May God, the Holy Spirit, further reveal you to see the enriching beauty in the world God still loves. May you always know the peace that surpasses understanding. From your entire Covenant family, we pray for wholeness of life this day and forevermore. **Amen!**

\*Blessing

Beloved children of God,  
what came into being in Christ was life,  
and the life was the light of all people.  
The light shines in the darkness,  
and the darkness did not overcome it.  
The light of Christ ✝ shine on you with grace and mercy  
and fill you with joy and peace! **Amen!**

\*Sending Hymn *Let Justice Flow Like Streams*

ELW #717

\*Dismissal

Go in peace, guided by the light of Christ!

**Thanks be to God!**

Postlude *Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee* (Turner)

### **Praying Together**

**... for those who are homebound, ill, hospitalized or recuperating:** Gayle Agg, Sheena Cameron, Joan Clarke, Gary Edler, Barbara Fossa, Carolyn Frajter, Ken Frajter, Donna Franz, Barb Gaglione, Michelle Garnett, Rosa Garnett, Clare Hanusz, Alex Hohenstein, Dylan King, Elaine Knerem, Jason Lanese, Sara Mendes, Debbie Morris, Phyllis Nemeth, Gary Smith, Arlene Stoltz, Marie Storms, Tom Susanek, Phyllis Welker, Maud Wright, Wilma Dancy, Bill Helmick, Nancy Helmick, Robert Lambrecht, Kim (Novak) Leonhardt, Laura Mele, Judy Morgan, Kris Sandor, Bill Wilkens, Eugene Winfrey, the Copeland/Lane Family.

General Fund receipts for week ending 1/15/2023: \$1787

General Fund receipts for week ending 1/22/2023:\$272.

*From all of us at the Lutheran Church of the Covenant, Robin, we thank you for your most wonderful ministry of music to us and all who have worshiped here*



*Thank you and (not) goodbye, to Covenant:*



*First of all, I am touched by the cards, gifts and, most of all, the kind words you have showered on me in the past weeks and months. If I've not been able to thank each of you individually, please know I appreciate your gestures immensely.*

*I'd like to share with you two stories out of which came some words of wisdom I associate with my years playing organ:*

*A while back, while chatting with Ann Droste, I mentioned to her my ongoing struggle with performance anxiety, or "stage fright." "Even in church?" she asked with a quizzical look. "Why would you be nervous? They're all your friends!" How right she was, and I wish I'd realized it sooner. I am grateful for your friendship, your support, patience and, yes, forgiveness, when that stage fright got the best of me!*

*Not long after I started as organist at Church of the Covenant, then-Pastor Allende was elected Bishop. After his final service at Covenant, I was trying to say goodbye through a waterfall of tears. The newly-elected Bishop Allende kindly suggested I consider a goodbye not as "goodbye," or an end (because we never know), but more as a "see you later." I've gone back to his words many times after that when faced with difficult separations and endings. And here I am at yet another dreaded goodbye as I leave the two wonderful church families whom I've been blessed to be part of for many, many years. So, I won't say "goodbye," but rather, "see you later!"*

*God be with you 'til we meet again!*

*Yours in Christ, Robin*

## *Lectionary Blog: A Gift for God*

Have you ever given (or received) a gift that wasn't appreciated? We can put all our thoughtfulness, creativity and even love into giving a gift, and sometimes it just doesn't connect. One must truly know the intended recipient to understand what they would want and what would connect with them. With Christmas not very distant in the past and Valentine's Day quickly approaching, many of us know the pressure of trying to find a gift that will convey love meaningfully. This week's lectionary passages circle around what gifts God truly desires from people.

We often see the well-known passage of Micah 6:8 in churches and on social media: do justice, love mercy, walk humbly with God. What is less-often discussed is the context in which this verse is written. God, through the prophet, is having a one-sided argument with the people. Some scholars even see this section as a sort of divine lawsuit against the people for violating the terms of the covenant. God calls the mountains and hills (Rashi, the 11th-century French sage, says these represent the patriarchs and matriarchs) to witness against the people Israel.

In Micah 6, God feels insulted and angry that the people claim that God has wearied them (3). Rashi understands that the people are tired of the expense and work of worshipping God in the temple. So God sets out to remind them why they might want to worship God. Out of the house of slavery in Egypt, God freed the people. God gave Aaron, Moses and Miriam as priest and prophets, respectively. God protected the Holy Community from the schemes of Balak and Balaam as they worked together to curse God's people and turn God and the Israelites against each other (see Numbers 22-24; 31:16).

The plan worked for a while, but Phinehas, Aaron's son, turned back God's anger. Micah's reference to the episode of the Baal of Peor at Shittim is a not very subtle reference to the disaster that happened when the Israelites turned from worshipping God in the ways God desires to focus on what *they* wanted to do in worship. God, through Micah, argues that God has always been consistent in taking care of the people, but they have repeatedly lost focus on thanking God in the ways that God likes to be thanked.

To bring the point home, the prophet asks facetiously what God wants. Does God want burnt offerings, young calves, thousands of rams, a river of oil or even child sacrifice? You can just hear the prophet growing more perturbed as he suggests increasingly costly

offerings that all miss the point. A burnt offering is all well and good, but it is meaningless without faithfulness. God doesn't want a perfect, expensive offering. Instead, God wants humans to be just to neighbors, to be merciful to people who sin against us, and to stay close with God on this journey of life. Those are the gifts of thanksgiving that God desires. If those things are in order, offerings will take care of themselves organically.

In case we missed the point from Micah, as we all do from time to time, Jesus reiterates the prophet's message again at the beginning of his Sermon on the Mount. The poor in spirit are blessed because God will give them the kingdom of heaven. Those who mourn are blessed because God will comfort them. The humble are blessed because God will deed to them the earth. Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness are blessed because God will satisfy them. The merciful are blessed because God will give them mercy. The pure in heart are blessed because God will reveal Godself to them. The peacemakers are blessed because God will adopt them. Those who are persecuted are blessed because they join the company of the prophets, and God will give them the kingdom of heaven as well.

What God wants—what God treasures—is humble, peaceful, merciful followers, who might even be persecuted for their allegiance to Jesus instead of power or comfort. We don't have to guess what it is that God wants from us—it's not a secret. Offerings are nice, but they are a secondary matter. Instead, God wants us to be changed by the Spirit and to live as a response to the good news that God has rescued us. In the Micah passage, God acts first, saving and redeeming the people. Only after recalling that does God ask humans for justice, mercy and faithfulness. In the same way, Jesus will first die to free humans from the powers of sin and death. Then, in response to Jesus' salvific work, we are called to gentle, merciful, humble faithfulness. These are the gifts that God wants.

*This Lectionary Blog, and other resources for the journey of faith, available on [LivingLutheran.org](http://LivingLutheran.org).*

*Cory Driver is the assistant to the bishop for emerging ministers and ministries for the Indiana-Kentucky Synod. His book on wilderness spirituality, *Life Unsettled*, is available from Fortress Press.*

# The Beatitudes

"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me."

Matthew 5:11 (NIV)

Based on Matthew 5:1-12 (NIV)



S T H I R S T G V H M Q B U S  
 T O D O Y R G P R E E O A F L  
 K T T Q O M Y L B Z J A U M K  
 X D A O M H U N G E R W V R Z  
 P L P N F U R W Y I D T X E N  
 E U E J M E R C Y A I M E M N  
 G B R W S P U L E R I S E N B  
 N C H E P B W D E I E D D U K  
 K H E E I T K H V G Q E R N I  
 T Q A R R Y N O F Y S E Y C N  
 E N R Y I I H H N S V N K W G  
 M A T S T J P L E S E C N A D  
 E U R P F I L L E D D I X N O  
 E Z F T H S B P X R I P L Q M  
 K Z H U H U C J L H O H C M R

KINGDOM	MERCY	EARTH	FILLED	MOURN
HUNGER	HEART	SPIRIT	BLESSED	INHERIT
THIRST	MEEK	PURE	POOR	HEAVEN