

February 1, 2026 + 10:30 A.M.

Fifth Sunday of Epiphany

We Join in Worship

Liturgist: Carol Callaway

If you need extra space for a wheelchair or walker, or if you have young children with you, please feel free to make use of our Playground, the extra space across the aisle from the sound booth.

PRELUDE I Need Thee Every Hour

Lowry/Larson

WELCOME

CHORAL INTROIT

ANNOUNCEMENTS

*THE PEACE OF CHRIST

*CALL TO WORSHIP (Adapted from *Psalms* 15)

Leader: O LORD, who may abide in your tent? Who may dwell on your holy hill?

ALL: Those who walk blamelessly, and do what is right, and speak the truth from their heart; who do not slander with their tongue, and do no evil to their friends, nor take up a reproach against their neighbors.

Leader: O LORD, who may abide in your tent? Who may dwell on your holy hill?

ALL: Those in whose eyes the wicked are despised, but who honor those who fear the Lord; who stand by their oath even to their hurt.

Leader: O LORD, who may abide in your tent? Who may dwell on your holy hill?

ALL: Those who do not lend money at interest and do not take a bribe against the innocent. Those who do these things shall never be moved. Let us dwell on the holy hill of the LORD forever! Let us worship the LORD!

*OPENING HYMN: "O for a World" (386)

INVITATION TO CONFESSION:

Leader: Hear what the LORD says: "Rise, plead your case before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice." Let the mountains and hills hear our voices as we confess to the LORD with openness and honesty.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (unison)

God, we raise our voices and plead our case before you and the mountains. We confess that we are not good students. We do not listen when you instruct us. We do not follow the examples you provide us. We pick and choose the teachings that are most convenient for us and for the continuation of our lives as they are. We ignore those lessons that urge us and show us how to transform ourselves. We ignore those lessons that urge us and show us how to transform the world. Forgive us for not following your teachings. Forgive us for not following you. In the name of Jesus Christ, our great teacher, we pray. Amen.

KYRIE

Lord, have mercy upon us.

Christ, have mercy upon us.

Lord, have mercy upon us.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Leader: Friends, hear the good news. Jesus Christ became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

ALL: In Jesus Christ we are forgiven! Hallelujah! Thanks be to God!

GLORIA PATRI

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Amen.

STATEMENT OF FAITH: *(The Apostles' Creed)*

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick 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.

We Hear God's Word

EMBODIED WORD FOR DISCIPLES OF ALL AGES

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION: *(Unison)*

God, source of all light, by your Word you give light to the soul. Pour out on us the spirit of wisdom and understanding that our hearts and minds may be opened. Amen.

HEBREW BIBLE LESSON: *Micah 6:1-8*

EPISTLE LESSON: *1 Corinthians 1:25-31*

GOSPEL LESSON: *Matthew 5:1-12*

SERMON Blessed Are the Merciful

MUSICAL MEDITATION *When I Return*, in memory of Sharon LaFlech

We Respond in Faith

THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S TABLE

GREAT PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING:

Leader: The Lord be with you.

ALL: And also with you.

Leader: Lift up your hearts.

ALL: We lift them to the Lord.

Leader: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

ALL: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

...And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.**

...And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as we proclaim the mystery of faith. **Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.**

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and wine. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the body of Christ. By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world, until Christ comes in final victory and we feast at his heavenly banquet. Through your Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy Church, all honor and glory is yours, almighty God, now and forever. **Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

BREAKING THE BREAD AND POURING THE CUP

Leader: The bread of heaven. The cup of the new covenant. The gifts of God for the people of God.

ALL: Let us keep the feast!

COMMUNION OF THE PEOPLE

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

OFFERING INVITATION:

Leader: Micah gives us these beautiful words: "The LORD 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?'" Let us live into these requirements as we give our tithes, offerings, and pledges. Please place your offering in the plate as it is passed. If you are worshiping from home, please mail in your checks or use our online giving option on the website. Now let us reflect on and practice stewardship as we listen to today's offertory.

OFFERTORY What Does the Lord Require

Eric Routley

*** DOXOLOGY:**

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God, above, ye heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen!**

***PRAYER OF DEDICATION: (Unison)**

O God, we dedicate these gifts to you and to your Kingdom as disciples of the King. Give us the wisdom to use them well. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

We Go Into the World

* **CLOSING HYMN:** “Blest Are They” (Glory to God 172)

BENEDICTION

CHORAL BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE Give Praise to God

Paul S. Jones

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* So that we can properly greet people who come to the building during Sunday morning worship, Door A will be the only unlocked external door during the worship service.

PEEK AT THE WEEK:

SUNDAY 2/1:	Adult Study – 9:00 AM Communion Worship In Person & Online – 10:30 AM
MONDAY 2/2:	GA – 6:30 PM Al-Anon – 7:00 PM
TUESDAY 2/3:	Private Flute Lessons 2-8 PM (FH) Deacons – 6:30 PM AA – 7:30 PM
WEDNESDAY 2/4:	Private Flute Lessons 2-8 PM (FH) “Bring Your Own Bible” Bible Study 7-8 PM (Zoom) GA – 7:00 PM
THURSDAY 2/5:	Choir – 7:00 PM
SATURDAY 2/7:	AA – 6:30 PM

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **“BYOB”** (Bring Your Own Bible) discussion group meets on Wednesday evenings from 7-8 pm online using Zoom. Each week this group takes a look at the scriptures from our Sunday worship services, asking questions, bringing up different perspectives, and hopefully encountering the Holy Spirit in a fresh way. The link for the Zoom meetings is emailed out weekly. You can connect to Zoom with a smart phone, tablet or computer. If you’re not familiar with how to use Zoom, or to get on our e-mail list, please contact Pastor Tyler or Heather Casiano.
- **“THE BIBLE IN TODAY’S WORLD”** class meets on Sunday mornings from 9-10 am in the middle classroom (across from Pastor Tyler’s office). This group is reading through the book, “A is for Alabaster” by Anna Carter Florence. Each week is independent of the other weeks, so come as you are able. If you need a book, or for any other questions, contact Heather Casiano.
- **FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA!** If you don’t already follow us on Facebook and Instagram, please start doing so @firstpchighland on both Facebook and Instagram.
- **INTERESTED IN BECOMING A MEMBER OF FPCH?** You are always welcome here, whether a member or not! If you are interested in joining as a member, though, we would love to have you! Please talk to Pastor Tyler if you would like to learn more.

Opportunities to serve as the HEART, HANDS, and FEET of Jesus Christ:

- **BLESSING BOX** Please continue to place items in the Blessing Box and take items if you are a person in need! Items most commonly donated: Canned goods with pull tabs, socks, toilet paper, non-perishable foods, small snacks, toiletries, baby wipes and diapers. Please check expiration dates!
- **HELP STOCK OUR PANTRY!** Please pick up a beautifully decorated grocery bag in the narthex and fill it to help the church's food pantry.

Prayer List

Anthony
Brady Vanes
George Griner
Guy Hendricks
Bill and Anettia Holmes
David Markley
David Kingen
Diana and Ray Mendoza
Janet Orem
Cindy Waltz and Sister
Yvonne Suroviak
Georgette Sknerski
Jakob Holden
Denise Matthys
Jan Oprea
Florance Cody
Kathy & Chuck Pumnea
Laura Buono Domsic
The Windstrups
Rick Parker
Gary Everhart
Caroline Studer
Darlene O'Brien
Doug & Sue Matthews
Janet Terpstra
Glen Nahler
Tom
David Hamblin
Jana Tolley
Larry & Bonnie Perryman
Delta Rose
Winnie Owen
Breeanne
Mom Bechtler
Victor
Marian Clayton
Ella P
Melissa J.

Rita Stronczek
Keren, Zuriel, and Gedeon
OGB
Edna Cruz
Charlie
Jerry & Rena Martinez
Nicole
Greg
Pastor Jane
Mary Ellen Edeus
Jane and David
Flora R.
Tyler Gall
Phil
Luana Sulkowski
Sonny Buono
Shannon Sutton
Robin
Eunice
Betsy
David
Trina & Scott
Joe & Kathy
Breanne Polan
Tammy
Alex
Ben
Mike Kelly
Sue Heth
Ron Toren
Tony
Mildred
Neal
Rita
Carolyn

Micah 6:1-8

6 Hear what the Lord says:

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

² Hear, you mountains, the case of the Lord,
and you enduring foundations of the earth,
for the Lord has a case against his people,
and he will contend with Israel.

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

⁴ 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.

⁵ 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.”

⁶ “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?

⁷ 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?”

⁸ 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?

1 Corinthians 1:25-31

²⁵ For God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God’s weakness is stronger than human strength.

²⁶ 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. ²⁷ 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; ²⁸ God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to abolish things that are, ²⁹ so that no one might boast in the presence of God. ³⁰ In contrast, God is why you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, ³¹ in order that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.”

Matthew 5:1-12

5 When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. ² And he began to speak and taught them, saying:

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 receive 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 for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

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

Blessed Are the Merciful

Micah 6:1-8; 1 Corinthians 1:25-31; Matthew 5:1-12

“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?
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?”
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?”

What does the LORD require of you, what does the LORD require of you? To seek justice, and love kindness, and walk humbly with your God! Justice, kindness, walk humbly with your God.

Thus proclaimed the prophet Micah in the eighth century BC. And thus sang an auditorium full of Presbyterians at Hanover College every summer at Synod School when I was growing up. They are some of the most powerful words ever spoken or sung, and so much of their power is in their simplicity. God’s call upon our lives, God’s requirement of us, is really not that hard! The Hebrew Bible is chock full of laws, and in the era of the Church we have added a lot of our own unwritten laws and expectations to control behavior, to decide who belongs, to create our hierarchies of worthiness. And yet what the LORD our God actually requires of us is so

simple! *To seek justice, and love kindness, and walk humbly with your God!* It is also easy to remember! It is something that we can pull into our brains through any meditation. It is something that we can put into our actions in any situation! Imagine what would happen if we all did just that in every situation—if we paused to remember those words and then acted according to those words. I challenge all of us to try that this week! In every situation, big or small, easy or hard. Let us see what it does for others. Let us see what it does for us!

Now I know I just said that the words are simple, but I am already going to complicate matters because, well, it's me! Some translations have "mercy" instead of "kindness." *Love mercy*. And that makes sense, for kindness and mercy are so intimately connected. The Hebrew word, *chesed*, also is sometimes translated with that rare and beautiful English word lovingkindness. And really, they are just different reflections of the same pond. Lovingkindness is exactly what it sounds like—kindness that comes from a place of love and kindness that is enacted in a loving way. Mercy, then, is lovingkindness that is enacted when we have a bit more power or strength or wealth or leverage in that moment. If you have one dollar and your neighbor has one penny, to share some of what you have is to show mercy. If you have extra layers on and your neighbor is outside in the cold with no warm clothing, to share your coat is to show mercy. If you have on judges' robes and your neighbor has on chains, to release them is to show mercy. If you have a seat at the table and your neighbor has none, to invite them is to show mercy. If you have the authority of a parent and your child makes a mistake, to teach rather than punish is to show mercy. If you are the popular kid at school and your peer is not so popular and is being bullied by other kids, to step in and defend them is to show mercy. If you have the power and privilege of being a citizen and your neighbor is undocumented and being bullied by the government, to step in and defend them is to show mercy. If you have a gun and the full weight of the government behind you and your neighbor does something that you consider unlawful, to hold back from pulling the trigger is to show mercy. I hope you get the idea!

We don't talk much about mercy these days, and yet it is one of the core virtues of our faith. Indeed, it is one of the core attributes of the God in whom we put our faith. The scriptures are full of descriptions of God as merciful. For God certainly has more power than any of us, and God certainly treats us with lovingkindness. God has the power to punish us, and yet God chooses to teach us. God has the power to condemn us, and yet God chooses to save us. God has the power to stand apart from us, and yet God chose to become one of us. To understand us better, to guide us better, to teach us better. In all of this, God shows mercy to a magnitude beyond anything our minds could ever imagine. And after he called his first disciples and they left their nets to follow him, he went up the side of the mountain, *and he began to speak and taught them, saying:*

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

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

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

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

"Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

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

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

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

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

The Sermon on the Mount, Jesus' best known lesson as a teacher, starts with these blessed beatitudes, so they must be important! We should listen well! With them he gives us a glimpse of his remarkable vision. He reveals his priorities. He makes it known who he wants on his team. He chooses sides and lets it be known who belongs in and to his Kingdom. He teaches us what to do, how to *be* in order to be blessed. If we listen closely, we will hear the voice of Micah echoing across the eons, for of course Jesus knew the prophets well. Justice and humility are emblazoned across the beatitudes, with Jesus fleshing them out as the Word made flesh. And right smack dab in the middle of it all, the very heart of this lesson, is "Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy." As we now know, wrapped up in that is kindness and lovingkindness. Blessed are the kind! Blessed are the loving kind! Wow! Listen to that!

Loved ones, we have been witnessing what happens in a world without mercy lately, and it has been truly horrifying. We have been shaken to our cores by violence being perpetrated by masked gunmen who have the full weight of the government behind them and their actions—violence against neighbors who are simply seeking to live humble lives in safety, violence against neighbors who are already mourning so much, violence against even children. We have been shocked by the persecution of peacemakers hungering and thirsting for righteousness from the streets of Tehran to the streets of Minneapolis. We have been startled by the devastation caused by bullies in our schools, bullies in our streets, and bullies in our halls of power. We have been stunned by the callousness of political leaders whose policies are responsible for the violence and persecution.

And let me be clear. It is not just one person or one party or one nation! It is an entire system of mercilessness that has been growing and spreading for years and years—across administrations, across oceans, along border walls, on Facebook walls, on the news that we choose, in the language that we use, in the ways that we abuse, we have become merciless as a society. We have glorified power used to control and have disparaged the use of power to help others. We have idolized strength that causes harm and have diminished the use of strength to bring healing. We have worshiped wealth that is accumulated individually and have demonized the idea of sharing. And so children are bullied in schools and so children are separated from their parents in detention centers and so children are targeted and killed en masse in Palestine and Sudan. And so children are suffering the most due to hunger and thirst throughout the world. These are all reflections of the same swamp of mercilessness, of kind-lessness, of lovelessness.

And yet the answer is so, so simple. What does the LORD require of you? What does the Lord teach us upon the mountain? In the thoughts in our heads. In the emotions of our hearts. In the whims of our spirits. In the words we speak. In the attitudes we present. In the actions we take. In the ways that we treat others. In the ways that we treat ourselves. *To seek justice, and love kindness, and walk humbly with your God!* Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy! It is not too much to ask! It is not too much to do! It is not too much to demand of those in power! After all, we did not come up with the requirement. It comes directly from the LORD our God. And again imagine what this world will be like when we all meet that requirement! Hallelujah!

And I have good news, loved ones! Though we may be reviled and persecuted, though all kinds of evil may be falsely uttered against us on account of the Lord whom we serve, the teacher whom we listen to, the shepherd whom we follow, we will be blessed! When we face risk and hardship for showing mercy and seeking justice, and loving kindness walking humbly with our God—let us rejoice and be glad! For great is our reward in heaven! As the psalmist tells it:

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

Surely goodness and **mercy** shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
my whole life long. Amen!

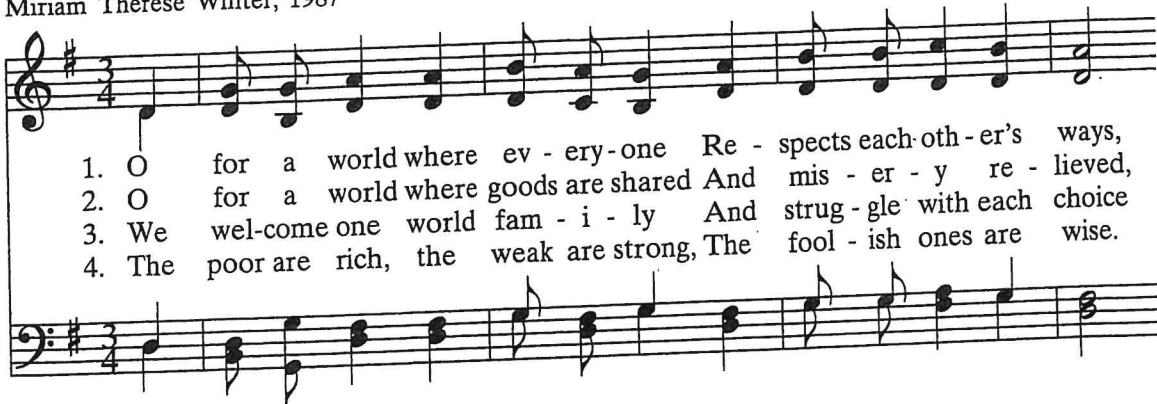
O for a World

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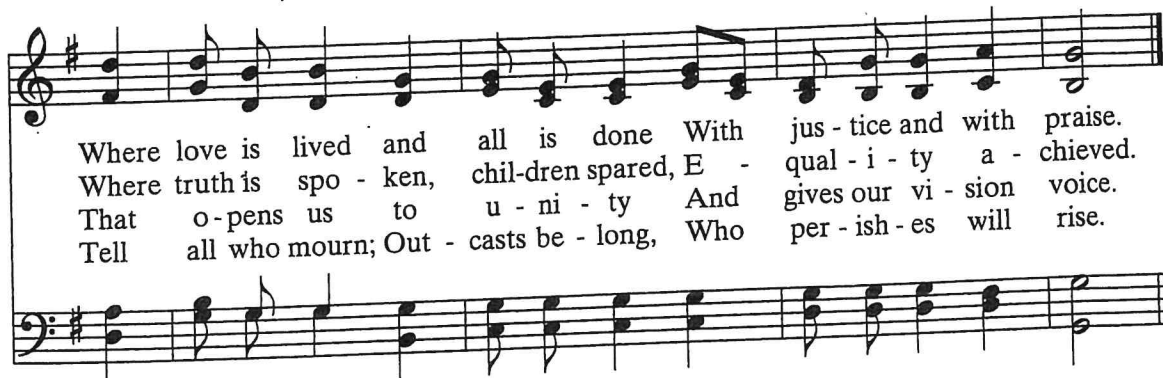
AZMON CM

Carl Gotthelf Gläser, 1828
Arr. Lowell Mason, 1839

Miriam Therese Winter, 1987



1. O for a world where ev - ery-one Re - spects each-oth - er's ways,
2. O for a world where goods are shared And mis - er - y re - lieved,
3. We wel-come one world fam - i - ly And strug - gle with each choice
4. The poor are rich, the weak are strong, The fool - ish ones are wise.



Where love is lived and all is done With jus - tice and with praise.
Where truth is spo - ken, chil-dren spared, E - qual - i - ty a - chieved.
That o - pens us to u - ni - ty And gives our vi - sion voice.
Tell all who mourn; Out - casts be - long, Who per - ish - es will rise.

5. O for a world preparing for
God's glorious reign of peace,

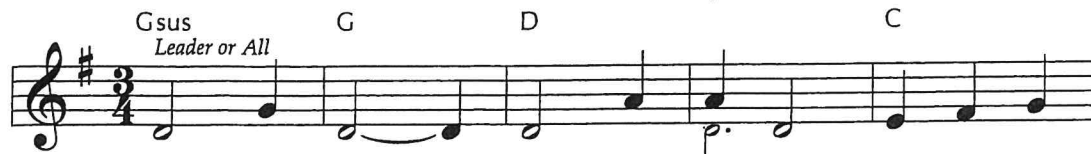
Where time and tears will be no more,
And all but love will cease.

Alternate version, 466

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Blest Are They

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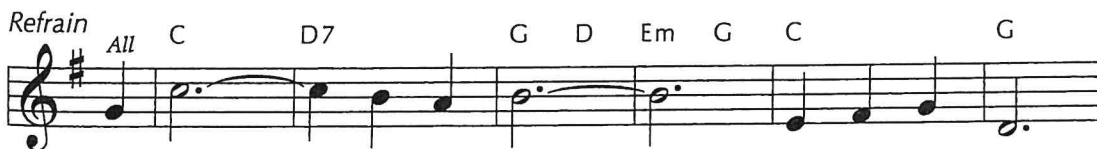
1 Blest are they, the poor in spir - it; theirs is the
 2 Blest are they, the low - ly ones; they shall in -
 3 Blest are they who show mer - cy; mer - cy
 4 Blest are they who seek peace; they are the
 5 Blest are you who suf - fer hate, all be -



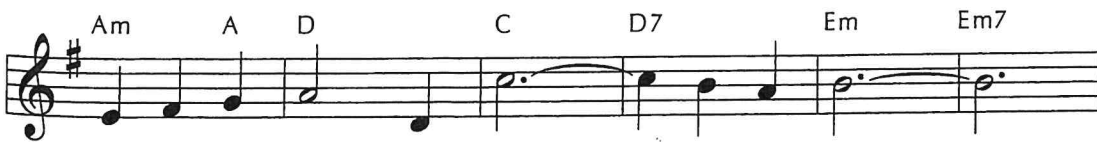
king - dom of God. Blest are they,
 her - it the earth. Blest are they who
 shall be theirs. Blest are they, the
 chil - dren of God. Blest are they who
 cause of me. Re - joice, be glad;



full of sor - row; they shall be con - soled.
 hun - ger and thirst; they shall have their fill.
 pure of heart; they shall see God.
 suf - fer in faith; the glo - ry of God is theirs.
 yours is the king - dom; shine for all to see.



Re - joice and be glad! Bless - ed are you;



ho - ly are you! Re - joice and be glad!



Yours is the king - dom of God!