

A NOTE TO PARENTS

In a Russian Orthodox chant of the Beatitudes, included in the Episcopal Hymnal (#560), the words “Remember your servants, Lord, when you come in your kingly power,” precede and follow the Beatitudes themselves. This plea echoes, of course, the prayer of the dying bandit on the cross, and it places the Beatitudes in an especially helpful context. For the next several weeks, as we read the terrifyingly lofty demands of the Sermon on the Mount, it may help us to bracket them mentally with the dying bandit’s prayer: “Remember us, O Lord, in your Kingdom”—not because we have done so well at keeping your commandments, but because we have not.

Read the original words of the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12) with your child. You will need to translate virtually every line into what my children call “kid language.” And that is no easy job. What does “poor in spirit” mean? *The Sunday Paper Junior* suggests “people who know they need God,” but perhaps you can do better. Who are the “meek”? “Gentle” is only a part of it. Meekness is the quality of allowing God to do what he wishes with you—including, perhaps, bless and honor you. Meekness is openness to the Spirit’s work in your life, the ability to get out of your own and other people’s ways, the willingness to put aside what you had in mind and do what God has in mind instead. It has nothing to do with wimpiness: true meekness takes courage. And what does “blessed” mean? How can Jesus say, “Blessed are those who mourn”? This very troublesome second Beatitude shows clearly that the Beatitudes are not commandments: Jesus does not enjoin us to mourn so that he can comfort us and pat us on the head for being blessed and brave. The blessedness of the Beatitudes is the peace that comes with knowing one is faithfully doing whatever is called for by one’s situation, and that God can bring blessing from it. In a world full of loss and pain, mourning is honest and right: it may be the only response that carries any integrity. Jesus never tells us to pretend before God. But having given us permission to mourn, he promises us blessing, and then tells us to rejoice and be glad—for he will, indeed, remember us (our failures—forgiven; and our meekness—blessed) when he comes into his Kingdom.

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Year A
4th SUNDAY
after EPIPHANY

Jesus went up on a mountain with his friends,
and taught them about
God's Kingdom.

MATTHEW 5:1



THIS IS WHAT JESUS SAID:

"Blessed are the people who know they need God, and are hungry for what is right. God will satisfy them."



"Blessed are the people who are sad. God will comfort them."



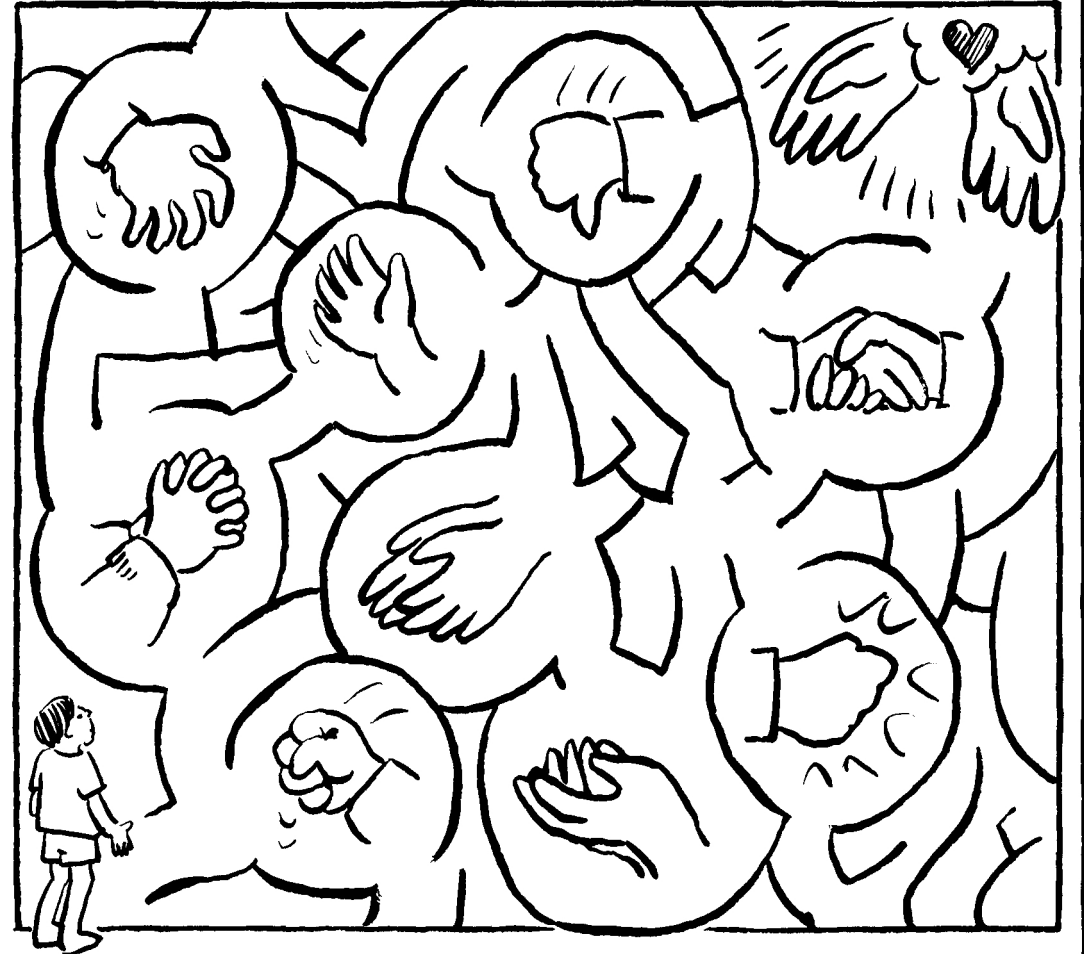
"Blessed are the gentle people. God will give them the earth."



"Blessed are the people who forgive and help: God will forgive them. Blessed are peacemakers: they are God's children."



God's Kingdom comes from love and peace. Love and peace are not always easy. They take hard work. Sometimes they hurt. But Jesus said, "Be glad! This is the way to God's Kingdom!"



Find the way to God's Kingdom. Which hands are helping or showing the way, and which ones are blocking the way?