



### *Repent*

After John the Baptist is beheaded, Jesus retreats to Galilee, closer to home. Remember, John was Jesus' cousin. They probably grew up together. When John was murdered, it must have affected Jesus deeply. Finally, he leaves Nazareth and moves closer to the Sea of Galilee to a town called Capernaum. He begins his public preaching and gathers his apostles.

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Jesus begins his public ministry by announcing the coming of the kingdom. He tells us it's time to repent. Remember the kingdom of God is not just the heaven we hope to get to after we die. The kingdom of God is also with us here, right now. The kingdom is any place or time where God's love is present and active.

Jesus was able to claim the kingdom was at hand because he brought the kingdom. Any place or time Jesus was present, there was the kingdom. As Christians we are asked to be Christ today and bring the kingdom to our own time and place. For most of us that means we take Jesus' words to heart. We look at ways we can change for the better. We need to adjust how we act or how we react.

Think about what needs to change in your everyday family life for the kingdom to reign in your home. Begin with the surface things. Is the pace too fast? Is the noise level too high? Is there a constant attitude of "I'll get you back!"? We know that no amount of coaxing or nagging will change someone else if he or she isn't ready to change. And so as the grown-up in the household, more than likely, change will have to begin with you.

*Third Sunday in  
Ordinary Time  
Matthew 4:12-23  
date: \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_*

**"Repent, for the  
kingdom of heaven  
has come near"  
(v. 17).**

Remember, with God's help we can change how we act and respond. With God's help we can become our best self. And with God's help the changes in you will bring out the best in others.

**Family Response:** Talk about what would make everyone in the family get along better. How can each person help?

**Personal Response:** What changes need to be made for your home to reflect God's kingdom? How can you help make this happen?

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What do you want to remember from last week?

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What are you looking forward to next week? What are your concerns?

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*Blessed Are We*

When Jesus sees the crowds who are following him, he goes up a mountain. He wants to make sure everyone can see and hear him as he tells them how they can find happiness.

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Moses went up a mountain to receive the Ten Commandments, and in Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus went up a mountain to give us the Beatitudes. The Ten Commandments are a set of laws to help us live in harmony with God’s love. The Beatitudes are broader and more subtle. They offer a vision and suggest a self-giving attitude that goes beyond the Commandments.

The Beatitudes talk about the poor and those who mourn, those who are hungry for justice, those who are merciful and peacemakers, those who are pure in heart and those who are persecuted. Jesus tells us that all of these people will be happy. They will be blessed. How can this be?

Perhaps Jesus is just reminding us that life is difficult. Each of us will face our own hardships. We need to remember that nothing—not poverty or deep loss or suffering, not the worst injustice can triumph over us. Jesus offers his own strength and endurance, his assurance that we will not be alone. We are blessed. We are gifted not only with faith but hope.

The Beatitudes ask us to be meek, not the doormat sort of meek, but the biblical idea of meek—tolerant and unassuming. We are to be poor in spirit. Money and possessions should not own us. We are to

*Fourth Sunday in  
Ordinary Time  
Matthew 5:1–12  
date: \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_*

**“Blessed are the  
poor in spirit...  
those who mourn...  
the meek...those  
who hunger...  
the merciful...  
the pure...  
the peacemakers...”  
(vv. 3–9).**

be peacemakers and hunger and thirst after justice. The Beatitudes offer a positive way to respond to difficult life experiences. They encourage us to live in a self-possessed, positive way.

Finding the kingdom of God is not just about keeping the Ten Commandments; it's keeping the commandments with the right attitudes—the Beatitudes.

**Family Response:** Talk to your family about what difficulties they are facing this week. Encourage each other to be tolerant. Pray together to find ways your family members can be peacemakers.

**Personal Response:** Which of the beatitudes do we find most difficult to live?

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What do you want to remember from last week?

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What are you looking forward to next week? What are your concerns?

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### *Shine Your Little Light*

Jesus gives his disciples a powerful metaphor on how they are to live their lives. They are to be a light to the world—ablaze with the Good News of the gospel message. Wherever they go, they are to share their light.

We know from the Gospels that Jesus Christ is the light of the world. His goodness and love have the power to obliterate the darkness of fear, poverty and oppression. Matthew’s Gospel reminds us that we share Christ’s light. It is our gift as children of God, but it is not a gift meant to be stowed away or kept to ourselves.

With the light of Christ we are empowered to break through the darkness and share God’s love and goodness with all those in need. We refuse to tolerate racist talk and shine a light through prejudice. We gather food and send it to a food pantry, and we bring a light into the darkness of hunger and poverty. We bake some cookies, practice some songs and bring our light to a nursing home—casting out, for at least a little while, the darkness of loneliness.

The light of Christ can be shared in all sorts of simple ways: a kind letter, a phone call, a smile or a hug. Parents share their light with their children with every story they read and every tussle of their child’s hair. And I know, firsthand, children share their light with us.

Yesterday was a bad day for me; everything was going wrong. There were family problems and work worries, another book

*Fifth Sunday in  
Ordinary Time*

*Matthew 5:13–16*

date: \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_

**“[L]et your light  
shine before others,  
so that they may see  
your good works and  
give glory to your  
Father in heaven”  
(v. 16).**

deadline and some big-time back pain. Then my son and daughter-in-law stopped by with my newest grandchild.

As I sat and rocked baby Julia and felt the wonderful weight of her four-month-old body across my chest, my body relaxed with a deep sense of peace. And when Julia brought her head back and looked at me, her beautiful smile lit up my day. Without even knowing it, Peter and Katie shared the light of their lives with me, by bringing Julia's gentle Christ light into my darkness.

**Family Response:** Talk about how Jesus wants you to be a light in the dark when people are in need or want. Ask family members to share a time when someone has been a light to them.

**Personal Response:** Consider the people in your life. Who could use a little of Christ's sunshine in their lives? How can you be that light?

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*Go to Lent, p. 87. Return to this page when you have completed Lent and Easter.*



### *A Hospital for Sinners*

Jesus sits down and has dinner with tax collectors and several well-known sinners. The Pharisees are scandalized that Jesus would eat with such rabble. (Tax collectors were considered to be collaborators with the Romans.) When they spread their slander and prejudice to the townspeople, Jesus rebukes them.

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I remember a preacher once saying the church is not a hotel for saints: It's a hospital for sinners. I liked the analogy. It made me feel very comfortable. He was, of course, just paraphrasing Jesus' words below. The church has two main purposes. The first is to bring all of us, her imperfect and needy members, together to worship and pray and become closer to wholeness in God. The second is to send us out to find the walking wounded of the world and invite them into our church, a place where they can heal and become more whole.

Jesus came to reconcile the world and all people, to become one with our all-loving God. He came to shake folks up and remind them that they were created in and for goodness. Those already on track who live their lives righteously don't need Jesus in the same desperate way as those who are still in the darkness.

Remember, the truly holy are not necessarily the same people who walk around thinking themselves righteous. I've seen too many self-proclaimed "righteous" people act in hurtful and destructive ways, absolutely certain they were right. Unjust wars and inquisitions can be the results of

*Tenth Sunday in*

*Ordinary Time*

*Matthew 9:9-13*

date: \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_

**"For I have come  
to call not the  
righteous but  
sinners"  
(v. 13).**

such self-righteousness. Relying completely on self-diagnosis can be a dangerous thing.

I have to remind myself that I may think I am doing just fine when actually I am one of those walking wounded very much in need of some intensive care. Fortunately, there are good people in my church to help me discern my direction. Jesus advises us often not to judge others. In our church-hospital we never know who the doctor is, and who the patient is.

**Family Response:** Talk about the church as a hospital for sinners. What are some of the ways the church can help heal?

**Personal Response:** Today where are you on the righteous to sinner scale? How can we check out our self-evaluation?

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### *Give Without Payment*

Jesus continues to preach his message of forgiveness and love. As he looks out over the faces in the crowd, Scripture tells us his heart is moved because he sees so many people who are troubled and abandoned. “Like sheep without a shepherd,” Jesus sees this as a universal problem and sends his apostles out into pagan lands to minister to all people.

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The apostles were not lost sheep. They weren’t troubled or abandoned. They had found their shepherd. Each day Jesus helped them see their individual gifts and worth. He nurtured them with love and compassion on a daily basis, and then he sent them out because the gifts God freely gives are meant to be shared.

We have all been blessed with unique gifts and talents, and like the apostles we are expected to appreciate them and freely share them.

Unfortunately, for me it is much easier to talk and write about this fact than it is to take it to heart.

Sometimes just accepting that I have a gift is a problem. People tell me how good my stew is, and I will tell them it was way too salty. The fact is I am a pretty good cook, but it has taken me years to learn how to say a simple “thank you” to the person who gives me a compliment.

The point is even if your only gift is that you can make the best goshdarned oatmeal in the world, you should have the grace to share it with whomever you can. If you were gifted with a college

*Eleventh Sunday in*

*Ordinary Time*

*Matthew 9:36—10:8*

*date: \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_*

**“You received  
without payment;  
give without  
payment”  
(10:8).**