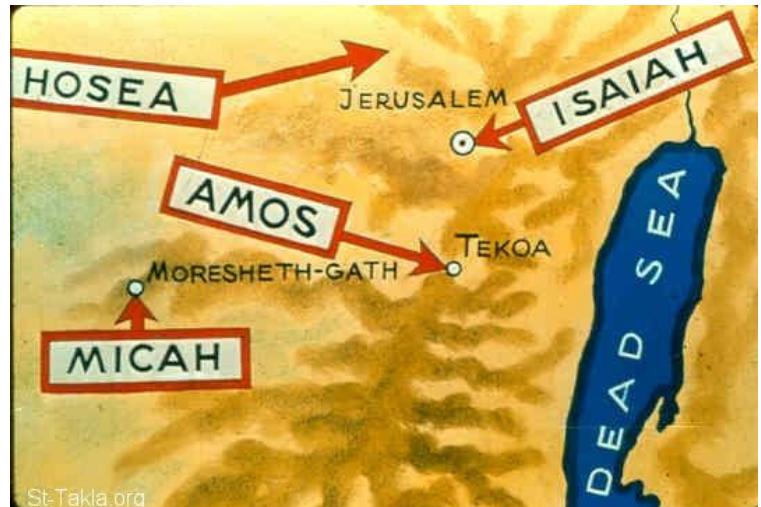


## EPIPHANY 4A - COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS ABOUT THE LESSONS FOR FEBRUARY 1, 2026

### Micah 6:1-8

- Micah is writing at about the same time as First Isaiah (the source of our first lesson last week). The beginning of the book places the time and location specifically: “The word of the Lord that came to Micah of Moresheth in the days of Kings Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.” (Micah 1:1) Micah’s hometown can be seen on the map to the right and on the larger map on the following page. For the southern kingdom of Judah he is writing during a period of relative peace, but the Assyrian invasion of the northern kingdom of Israel is right around the corner.
- Today’s lesson is perhaps the best-known passage in Micah. Micah reminds the people that God is not so concerned with religious ritual – “right” worship – but with faithful lives: “He has told you … 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?” This message challenges every religious community in every age. Too often, we are more concerned with getting worship “right,” while ignoring issues of justice and mercy. How can we encourage one another to do justice, love kindness/mercy, and to walk humbly with our God?



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### Psalm 15

- This psalm reminds us that the concerns that the prophets raise about justice and right living are found throughout Scripture. Look at the following list and ask yourself: which of these is easier for me to follow? Which is harder? How can I encourage myself with those actions that are more difficult for me?
  - 2Those who lead a blameless life and do what is right,
  - who speak the truth from their heart;
  - 3they do not slander with the tongue,
  - they do no evil to their friends;
  - they do not cast discredit upon a neighbor. (or “take up a reproach against their neighbors”)
  - 4 … but they honor those who fear the Lord.
  - They have sworn upon their health and do not take back their word. (or “stand by their oath even to their hurt”)
  - 5They do not give their money in hope of gain, (or, “do not lend money at interest”)
  - nor do they take bribes against the innocent.

### 1 Corinthians 1:18-31

- This part of Paul’s letter continues his response to the divisiveness in the Corinthian community, especially over whose teachings they follow (Cephas, Paul, or Apollos). Whereas Paul began last week with emphasizing a unity in Christ, here he emphasizes a unity in *the crucified Christ*. How does this emphasis on the crucified Christ overcome the Corinthian divisions? What attitudes or convictions are shaped by the crucified Christ?
- Paul reflects here the struggle that all early Christians dealt with in comprehending what Jesus being crucified meant. It was scandalous – a stumbling block – to the Jews, because the Messiah was supposed to be the political and military victor over the Roman Empire. It was foolishness to the Greeks, because Jesus in their minds would have been an unknown minor figure who dies a political death. Does the crucified Christ continue to be a scandal and foolishness? Have we somehow lost the scandal of Christ? How do we gain it back?

## Matthew 5:1-12

- With these words, Jesus begins the Sermon on the Mount, which is contained in the next three chapters. Matthew specifically addresses his disciples with these words, letting them know what sort of people God desires them to be. As you read these words, what kind of people or community does Jesus shape with these words? How can these words shape the sort of person God calls you to be?

- Kurt Vonnegut wrote the following statement:

"For some reason, the most vocal Christians among us never mention the Beatitudes (Matthew 5). But, often with tears in their eyes, they demand that the Ten Commandments be posted in public buildings. And of course, that's Moses, not Jesus. I haven't heard one of them demand that the Sermon on the Mount, the Beatitudes, be posted anywhere.

"Blessed are the merciful" in a courtroom? "Blessed are the peacemakers" in the Pentagon? Give me a break!"

- Compare Matthew's version of the Beatitudes with Luke's in Luke 6:20-26:

20 Then he looked up at his disciples and said:

'Blessed are you who are poor,  
for yours is the kingdom of God.

21 'Blessed are you who are hungry now,  
for you will be filled.

'Blessed are you who weep now,  
for you will laugh.

22 'Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. 23 Rejoice on that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets.

24 'But woe to you who are rich,  
for you have received your consolation.

25 'Woe to you who are full now,  
for you will be hungry.

'Woe to you who are laughing now,  
for you will mourn and weep.

26 'Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets  
How are these words similar to Matthew's? How are they different?

- An early Christian father Gregory of Nyssa suggested that the Beatitudes could be seen as a ladder with each rung being a step up on the way to becoming the people God calls us to be:

*When one climbs up by a ladder he sets foot on the first step, and from there goes on to the one above. ... It seems to me that the Beatitudes are arranged in order like so many steps, so as to facilitate the ascent from one to the other. For if a man's mind has ascended to the first Beatitude, he will accept what follows as a necessary result of thought, even though the next clause seems to say something new beyond what had been said in the first.*

How might that help our understanding of these statements of Jesus? What would it mean to start with being "poor in spirit"? Could that be similar to the first of the Twelve Steps of AA – "We admitted we were powerless over alcohol — that our lives had become unmanageable."?

# OLD TESTAMENT CANAAN

HOME OF THE PROPHETS

From the time of Abraham to the time of Jesus Christ, the land known as Canaan served as home for many prophets. This map shows the cities and towns of the prophets and major kings whose birthplace or residence is known. Important cities and the territory promised to the twelve tribes of Israel are also shown. □

Key

1. CAPITAL LETTERS: Israelite tribes and neighboring peoples
2. LARGE CAPITAL LETTERS: Northern Kingdom of Israel and Southern Kingdom of Judah
3. b = birthplace of . . .  
h = home of . . .

JERUSALEM  
(Salem, Jebus)

h. Melchizedek,  
h. David, b. Solomon,  
h. Isaiah, h. Lehi,  
h. Zechariah,  
h. Haggai, h. Malachi

Wilderness

AMALEK

SIMEON

Beersheba

h. Abraham, h. Jacob

Arad

EDOM

SODOM

GOMORRAH

MOAB

REUBEN

EDOM

EDOM</