



a Kendall Hunt Company

## Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A, Junior High - RCLB Lectionary



### Junior High Session

Zephaniah 2:3; 3:12-13

Matthew 5:1-12

## Opening Prayer

Let us pray.

O God, guide our actions and help us to become what you have called us to be.

In the name of Jesus Christ we pray.

Amen.

## Opening Life Reflection

The topic for today is Christian morality. To begin brainstorm with the young people some moral dilemmas that they may experience at school or with friends. Choose one dilemma and write it on top of a chalkboard or sheet of poster paper. Divide the young people into small groups and have them respond to the dilemma as followers of Christ. Provide paper and pencils for them to write down their responses. When they are done, give each small group the opportunity to share their response to the moral dilemma with the large group. Discuss:

- What helps you to follow Jesus in difficult situations?
- What gets in the way of you making good and loving choices?
- What does it mean to live a moral life?

Allow time for discussion. Living a moral life is more than following rules. It is freely choosing to live as a follower of Jesus.

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## **Listening to the Word of God**

In the Old Testament reading listen to the call to seek the Lord in all things.

Read Zephaniah 2:3; 3:12-13.

Allow for silence.

## **Scripture Discussion Starters**

- What are the people to seek?
- How may the people be rewarded?
- How are the people called to live?

In the Gospel reading today listen to Jesus teach about true happiness.

Read Matthew 5:1-12

Allow for silence.

- Where does Jesus go to teach the crowds?
- How does Jesus begin each sentence of his preaching?
- How does Jesus teach about true happiness?

## **Scripture Background**

Provide 2-3 minutes of background information on the readings using the Catechist Background section.

In the Old Testament reading today, Zephaniah calls the people of Israel to keep their eyes on God. The prophet stresses the importance of seeking the Lord in all things. His message brings great promise, but it also brings warning. The prophet threatens a “day of the Lord” which will bring down God’s wrath upon all evildoers. In Zephaniah’s words of promise we hear how the Lord will protect the people who, by their actions, prove themselves faithful to God. Today’s passage gives God’s people guidance so that they may live a moral life.

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In today's Gospel Jesus goes to the mountaintop to teach about true happiness. With this setting Matthew portrays Jesus as the new Moses, giving the people the new commandments from the mountaintop.

Jesus begins each statement of the new law with "Blessed are..." The first four commandments declare that the little ones who suffer are "blessed" in God's kingdom. The next four highlight those who work to bring about the kingdom of God. Jesus' Sermon on the Mount proclaims that happy are the people who keep their life centered on God.

## **Questions for Deeper Reflection**

- How do today's readings offer guidance on how to live a moral life?
- What does Jesus teach about true happiness?
- What is the connection between happiness and blessedness?

[If you are not going to continue with the doctrinal discussion, proceed to the Gospel in Life.]

## **Doctrinal Discussion Starters**

### **Foundations of Christian Morality**

The Church believes that Catholic morality comes from God's law, which is planted within the hearts of human beings. Natural law is the original sense of right and wrong that God has placed within all people. It helps us to know good and evil.

Christian morality is based on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, the scriptures, the teachings of the Church, and the living witness of a community of believers. For Catholic Christians living a moral life goes beyond following laws. Love for God and a desire to please God motivates us to make good and loving choices.

To determine the morality of our actions we look at three things. The object of our act; what we choose to do, the intention; why we choose to do what we do; and the circumstances; the how, who, when and where of the act. For an action to be judged as morally good these three elements must be determined as good.

We are free to choose either good or evil. The Beatitudes show us that true happiness is

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found in our life with God. We are blessed with God's spirit to help us choose to live our lives as followers of Jesus.

- What is natural law?
- What motivates Christians to make good and loving choices?
- Where do we learn how to live good moral lives?

## **The Gospel in Life**

How can you make a good moral choice this week?

### **Connecting to Faith First® Legacy Edition**

At Home Family Guide, theme 12  
Junior High, Morality, chapter 7

