

A selection from WordSource: the lectionary-based storytelling project from Children at Worship-Congregations in Bloom.

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In Barbara Crafton's book *The Blessed Paradox*, illustrated by Dee Rhodes, Rhodes suggests that the Beatitudes "describe two distinct Kingdoms, requiring a series of paired images depicting the Kingdom of the World and the Kingdom of Heaven." We suggest that you find this book, for the paintings therein will give you ideas for the staging of the Gospel.

What we are asking of you, for this week's Gospel, is to develop a series of "**paired tableaux**." For this week's recommendation, you will need two tableaux teams and a reader who can take her time with the scripture. For those of you who aren't yet familiar with "**living pictures**", we offer this brief explanation that we have posted before:

Some readings lend themselves well to visuals. Listen to the story and identify three to five "pictures" you would like to see. Gather a number of people (different ages) who will help in sharing the story. Ask one person to read the story while the listeners begin to "see" the pictures in their minds. Read the story again, pausing at your identified points, while they "freeze" into each picture, taking on characters and poses to reflect the reading (this should not take more than 10 to 15 minutes). Give permission to exaggerate expressions. They become a collection of living pictures that can now be shared with the congregation.

The tableaux you design will depend on the numbers in your teams. You could stage these with as few as two, or even one, per team. Or several.

But we want you to think in terms of the paired images: The Kingdom of the World and the Kingdom of Heaven. How will the "poor in spirit" differ from one Kingdom to the other? How will those who mourn in the Kingdom of the World differ from those who mourn in the Kingdom of Heaven?

With the eyes of the congregation closed, the reader will read each of the paired images, slowly and deliberately. Choose a young person to read this scripture. As she reads, the tableaux pairs will assume their poses. Then the reader will strike the bowl bell (another

instrument may be substituted) and the congregation will see both members of the pair, those who mourn in the Kingdom of the World, and those who mourn in the Kingdom of Heaven. Then, with the strike of the bowl bell, the congregation will close its eyes, to hear the next pair.

This time, we are leaving the staging to you (well, perhaps we'll make a suggestion or two.)

Matthew 5: 1-12

If the congregation needs to be instructed in the use of the bowl bell, then now is the time to do it. The instructions are simple. "When I strike the bell once, close your eyes. When I strike it again, open your eyes. Then close. Then open. No cheating."

Bell: *Close eyes*

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

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

Bell: *Open eyes*

(Again, ask yourselves the question, "How do the poor in spirit differ in the Kingdom of the World and the Kingdom of Heaven." Set up these two poses and allow the congregation time to ingest both.)

Bell: *Close eyes*

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

Bell: *Open eyes*

(How do those who mourn differ from one kingdom to the other. Set up this pair, and allow the congregation time to reflect.)

Bell: *Close eyes*

Lector: Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

Bell: *Open eyes*

(In the Crafton/Rhodes book, the artist has painted similar images, of a man and dog, back to the viewer. In the worldly kingdom, though, the painting is in black and white (grey); in the heavenly kingdom, the painting is in full color. Trees, grass and sunlight have been added.)

Bell: *Close eyes*

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

Bell: *Open eyes*

(Again, think of black and white and color. You might consider clothing the “world’s” team in black, and the “heavenly” team in bright colors.)

Bell: *Close eyes*

Lector: Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

Bell: *Open eyes*

(It’s not that the pairs are opposites. Not at all. The worldly scene continues to be transfigured into the heavenly scene.)

Bell: *Close eyes*

Lector: Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Bell: *Open eyes*

(Think in terms of gray tones or black, and brilliant color, sun color.)

Bell: *Close eyes.*

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

Bell: *Open eyes*

(Consider the ways that peacemaking might be a stressful vocation in the Kingdom of the World, and a restful vocation in the Kingdom of Heaven.)

Bell: *Close eyes*

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

Bell: *Open eyes*

(How might such persecution reveal itself in the world as juxtaposed with its heavenly pair?)

Bell: *Close eyes*

Lector: 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.

(We suggest that during the reading of these last two verses that you allow the tableaux teams to exit and take their seats. When the final bell strikes, the congregation opens its eyes and the service moves into the next piece.)

Bell: *Open eyes*

*****Consider Hymn 560 (1982 Hymnal ~ Episcopal) to accompany WordSource.**