



### Youth a big part of this year's MLK celebration

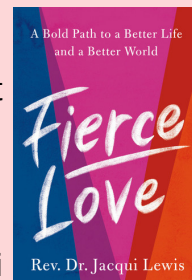
Young people from many United Methodist Churches will be centered in our second annual QC Methodist Coalition worship service celebrating the life and legacy of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr at Milan Trinity UMC on January 18 at 3:00 p.m. Many readers will participate in the service and will volunteer in the many roles needed to fill worship.

One highlight of the service will be an offering of a youth bell choir from the multi-church confirmation. A large group had their first rehearsal last Sunday. They are expected to be at Milan Trinity at 2:00 p.m. to have another rehearsal before the service.

Dr. Jack Thomas will be the preacher. He is a renowned scholar, author, speaker, and former President of Western Illinois University. He is national expert in higher education and an experienced Christian preacher.

### Examen on Feb. 10

The Examen book club at Atlas Collective has been rescheduled to Tuesday, February 10 at 5:30. The book, *Fierce Love*, by Jacqui Lewis is a powerful reflection on the power of love to change the world. Part memoir, Dr. Lewis tells a stunning story of surviving



and thriving through adversity. The power of fierce love of self and others can heal the world. Scan the QR code to register for the club. there is a free copy of the book to borrow in the church sanctuary.

## BIBLE IN 52 WEEKS - WEEK ONE

*In this daily reading plan, there are four readings, one each from the Torah, Prophets, Writings, and New Testament. Every day will take about 10 minutes in total. If you follow this plan you will read the entire Bible in 52 weeks and the Gospels twice.*

**Sun (Jan 18): Genesis 8; Joshua 8; Psalm 8; Mark 8**

**Mon (Jan 19): Genesis 9; Joshua 9; Psalm 9; Mark 9**

**Tue (Jan 20): Genesis 10; Joshua 10; Psalm 10; Mark 10**

**Wed (Jan 21): Genesis 11; Joshua 11; Psalm 11; Mark 11**

**Thu (Jan 22): Genesis 12; Joshua 12; Psalm 12; Mark 12**

**Fri (Jan 23): Genesis 13; Joshua 13; Psalm 13; Mark 13**

**Sat (Jan 24): Genesis 14; Joshua 14; Psalm 14; Mark 14**

### PASTOR'S NOTE

*This week we will come close to finishing the Gospel of Mark, Having done so, Matthew and Luke will be more gratifying. Joshua is tough - it might be the most problematic book of the whole Bible. It is difficult to honor the God that sanctions such tremendous violence. This is a good time to reflect on the historical context and the humanity of the text. Was this violence really God's will, or is this an interpretation of history that justifies the violence? How you respond to Joshua says a lot about how you understand the Bible*



## SERMON RECAP

### JANUARY 11, 2026

#### The Sermon on the Mount: Salt and Light Matthew 5:1-16

What do we have against happiness? In churches we talk about joy and hope as if they are more important than happiness. We are comfortable with saying we are blessed, or that we are pursuing justice. Why does it make us uncomfortable to say we want to be happy? Does it feel selfish? Are we so caught up in the struggles of the world or the value of self-denial that happiness seems like a petty pursuit?

I feel like this comes up every time we look at the The Sermon on the Mount, which begins with the beatitudes. Some scholars call this list of eight sayings “makarisms” from the Greek word *makarios*, which is used repeatedly to describe the otherwise dire situations of people that Jesus is describing.

Traditional translated to “Blessed” (in Latin, *beati*, which is where we get the term “beatitude”), this list of eight blessings seem to flip conventional wisdom. The poor in spirit, those who grieve, the meek; these are not the people generally thought of as blessed. Yet the word *makarios* is difficult to pin down. Many years ago I started using the Common English Bible as my primary translation. For many reasons, I feel it is the best available translation for people to read. One controversial thing it does however, is to translate *makarios* to “Happy.”

Many objectors say that happy cannot capture the idea because it is too temporary. Happy feels too dependent on the mood or on immediate conditions. I am happy when I find cash stuffed in my pocket when I put on a well-worn pair of jeans. I am happy when the light changes to green just as I am starting to slow down.

So Jesus couldn't possibly be talking about happiness, right? Why not? Why can't Jesus care about our happiness. Of course our happiness matters. Remember our nation's founding documents, the right to pursue happiness is as fundamental as life and liberty. Go to any book store and find the Self Improvement section and you will find dozens of books offering the secrets to happiness. If it is such a trivial thing, why do so many consider finding it to be a secret? Yet Jesus tells us the secret to

happiness in these beatitudes, and they are surprising.

This might be the biggest take away from the Sermon on the Mount. It is surprising. It is baffling. It turns everything that is common sense upside-down.

In both the Gospel of Matthew and Luke, Jesus' first public speech is his thesis statement. John the Baptist proclaimed that the Kingdom of Heaven (or Kingdom of God in Mark and Luke) is at hand because Jesus has arrived. Jesus now picks up this mantle and his entire ministry is about the Kingdom of Heaven. In Luke 4, he tells us that the Kingdom of God is about proclaiming release to the captive, recovery of sight to the blind... (Luke 4:14-21).

In Matthew he is more loquacious. He gives us three chapters (5-7) of a speech that describes the Kingdom of Heaven, which he is bringing to earth. Jesus is bringing the way of God down to earth, and everything about it is surprising. The Kingdom of Heaven inverts everything we thought we knew about blessing, honor, happiness, and power; and he begins this sermon by telling us the secret to happiness.

the Kingdom of Heaven begins when we stop depending on ourselves. When we let go of the lie of being “self made,” or the absolute absurdity of “pulling yourself up by your bootstraps,” or the lonely and isolating idea of “looking out for number one.”

Happiness is found in the Kingdom of Heaven when we are dependent on others, when we refuse to run the rat race. Happiness is found in taking time to grieve - not just fulfill the contractual obligations of bereavement leave. Happiness is found in simple living, in not trying to keep up with the Joneses. Happiness is found in pursuing right relationships that are marked by integrity, compassion, and mutual respect.

Jesus names the hopeless, the grieving, the humble, the hungry and thirsty for righteousness, the merciful, the pure hearted, the peacemakers, and the harassed. The beatitudes are about happiness, not blessing, not honor, not contentment. The key to happiness is putting aside individual gain for common good.

Happiness is simplifying and stripping away everything that props up the illusion of self-sufficiency, until what remains is a life open enough, humble enough, and spacious enough for God's grace to flow through it for the sake of others. This is how we bring Heaven to earth. This is the Kingdom of God.