

The sermon on the Mount

Károly Ferenczy, circa 1896
Oil on canvas, 135 x 203 cm
Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest



Matthew 5: 1-12a | 4th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year A)

You will be guided through some questions during the meditation, and you are invited to jot down your thoughts as you go along. We begin by entering into a movement of interior silence. I invite you to close your eyes and sit with your back straight, feet flat on the floor, hands placed gently in your lap, if you can. This is a posture of attentiveness, of waiting in expectation, of responding to God's invitation to intimacy.

I now invite you to take three deep breaths, to find the rhythm of your breathing. As we begin, I invite you to focus on your in-breath and on your out-breath, becoming aware of your breathing in and breathing out. This is a practice that brings us into the present moment, where God dwells. We will take 60 seconds to practice becoming aware of our breathing. [Set a timer for 60 seconds.]

As your awareness of your in-breath and out-breath begins to come into focus, we invite the Holy Spirit to be our guide:

Holy Spirit, we invite you to be present to us, to open the eyes and ears of our heart, as we listen attentively to what the Lord wants to reveal to us during this time of prayer.

On your in-breath say to yourself Holy and on your out-breath Spirit, we will do this for 60 seconds. Keep the awareness of the rhythm of your breathing in the background as you allow God to reveal the word, ideas, or message that God is waiting to reveal to you. Allow any images, words or thoughts come to mind without judging them. You may jot them down as we go along. I will first present the image and then the scripture.

VISIO

Observe: A "reading" of the painting and scripture. Read each comment or question slowly, allowing at least 10-20 seconds between each one. Follow the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

I now invite you to open your eyes and gaze at the image before you. Allow your eyes to gaze gently on the image. Let them sweep the whole of the picture.

Notice the shapes and the colours. Notice the lines and the details. Look for symbols. Notice if there is a place on the image where your eye is invited to linger. Are you called back again and again to a certain detail or colour? Try not to think about it too much. Simply notice where your energy is drawn. Notice where your eye is avoiding or passing over.

Let us now close our eyes to listen to the Gospel story as if hearing it for the first time.

Read the scripture passage reverently, or ask one or more of the participants to proclaim the text very slowly (to promote internalization).

Now I invite you to open your eyes and look at the image again. Allow a moment 60 seconds, of silence before continuing...

What part inspires you? Where do you experience resistance? Slowly become aware of the place on the image that is just for you today. It might be a colour, a shape, or a tiny detail. Linger here. Be open and present to this.

MEDITATIO

Meditate: Pondering its meaning. Read each comment or question slowly, allowing at least 10-20 seconds between each one. Follow the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

The image appears to be divided into three planes: notice the predominance of nature in the top plane. Notice the people clothed mostly in white in the middle plane. Notice Jesus the teacher, in the foreground, viewed from behind seated among the people. Notice the man on the left, sitting at the same level in almost the mirror image of Jesus. How does this composition speak to you...

I wonder what the artist had in mind when deciding on the composition of the scene. Do any thoughts come to mind about this? What colours dominate the painting... What colours stand out? Observe the characters in the painting... the way they are dressed... Notice Jesus the teacher how is he depicted?

ORATIO

Pray responding with commitment and fidelity. Read each comment or question slowly, allowing at least 10-20 seconds between each one. Follow the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

Take a second longer look. Imagine you are there with Jesus listening to him. Can you hear him speak directly to you... What does he desire for you... Let go of judging or critiquing. Simply be, lingering here, opening your heart to whatever wants to arise within you. As you reflect on your place on the image, what feelings or longings are evoked? What memories or hopes are stirred? Make room within your heart for whatever wants to emerge.

CONTEMPLATIO

We will spend the next 3 minutes in silence resting in the presence of God, allowing us to gather the fruits of this seeing, you will be invited to share any insights, images, thoughts or words that have arisen in you during this experience of listening and seeing with the ears and eyes of our heart.

Invite participants to share in small groups of not more than four people. Depending on the time allotted for sharing, instruct each participant to share the time equally.

Final prayer

Thank you Lord for this wonderful enriching experience, bless us as we continue to allow your Spirit to reveal to us more insights into this Gospel, give us the heart of a child so that we will remain open to your promptings. Help us to be attentive to what we see and hear, each day, so that we can become more and more aware your presence in the midst of our everyday lives. We make this prayer in the name of Jesus your Son our Lord. Amen.

The production of these files is made possible by donations from people who use them in their own communities. Please invite them to support this project by sending a cheque to the Société expo-bible du Québec or by making an online donation on our website. *A tax receipt will be issued for all donations of \$25 or more.*

Société expo-bible du Québec
117, avenue Labrie
Laval (Québec) H7N 3G1

Editors : Lucie J. McElligott and Sylvain Campeau