

Listening for the Promise

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

Epiphany 4 – February 1, 2026

*“Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you, and persecute you,
and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.”*

- Matthew 5:11 –

Penn and Teller are amazing magicians. Though other magicians do more spectacular feats, this pair can leave you scratching your head and asking, “How did they do that?” One thing they are known for is revealing the secret behind their tricks, without giving away the mystery and the magic of their performance.

One time they did a skit on the show “Saturday Night Live.” They made tissue ghosts fly in the air and appear to levitate above their heads. It seemed so simple, but it was impossible to figure out how they did it. After several minutes of these dancing and flying tissue ghosts, the camera pulled back to reveal that Penn and Teller had been hanging upside down. There was no magic involved; they were simply dropping the ghosts to the floor or had them hanging on strings. The trick was ruined by their revelation, but the real wonder came in how they could pull it off with no one noticing.

This kind of twist is often found in the Scriptures as well. For example, the Beatitudes in today’s lesson are beloved and well-known verses to most Christians, especially those who have experienced some sort of suffering. We want to think that we will find some reward for our suffering through our faith in God, and we want to see God’s blessings poured on those who are poor in spirit, in mourning, meek, hungry and thirsty for righteousness, merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers and persecuted — because they have experienced these things.

But let’s pull back the camera and look at this from a new perspective. What if the suffering actually **is** the blessing? The stories of the saints show us that faith in Christ does not always bring happiness, prosperity or peace.

Have you ever noticed how those moments of suffering offer us the greatest opportunities to be witnesses for the grace of God? The world sees the kingdom of heaven through our response to our suffering and how we rely on the comfort and mercy of God. We look on the surface for the blessing but the reality is that blessedness is from God — no matter the circumstances. Do not be surprised when this is what God does for you.