

Planning



Sunday, February 13 – Saturday, February 19 • 2022

Blessings and Woes

In Jesus' Sermon on the Plain, we hear that we are blessed to bring healing and blessing to others, inviting them to participate in the vision offered in Jesus' teaching.

This week...

Ecumenical prayer calendar

Austria, Liechtenstein, Switzerland

As listed in *Pilgrim Prayer: The Ecumenical Prayer Cycle*, edited by Ester Pudjo Widiasih and Karen L. Bloomquist. (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2018). <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/prayer-cycle> offers valuable aids for intercessory prayers, prayer on behalf of and in solidarity with others.

Special day ([commentary](#) on p. 176)

February 15 – Nirvana Day (*Buddhism*)

Personal reflection

"[Jesus] came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea, Jerusalem, and the coast of Tyre and Sidon" (Luke 6:17).

Imagine a world that Jesus is talking about. It's a world of generosity, love, life, and compassion. Those are things people who are hungry, poor, and sad understand and long for. They're ready and waiting for God's world, or reign, to come – and they'll welcome it with joy when it does! People who live in ways that make life good for themselves but hard for others don't have much space for generosity, love, life, and compassion. That this kind of world will come is a tough message for them to hear. No wonder Jesus says they are going to weep.

The planning page is provided in text format for copying, adapting, and adding to your bulletin or online worship resources or website or social media (see Text folder, Worship Outline).

Sunday, February 13, 2022

6th Sunday after the Epiphany
6th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Revised Common Lectionary (Year C)

Jeremiah 17:5–10

Psalm 1

1 Corinthians 15:12–20

Luke 6:17–26

the focus in age-level materials

Liturgical colour green

Notes

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Online Resources

Lection Connection

Essays and discussion prompts linking current events with this week's scriptures. Use for sermon preparation, Bible studies, and small groups or share on social media at <https://www.seasonsonline.ca/10/>

Nurturing Faith and Spirituality at Home

An easy-to-share, weekly online resource supports the spiritual lives and faith formation of individuals and families at home. It is provided in the [Faith at Home](#) folder.





Jeremiah 17:5–10

Psalm 1

1 Corinthians 15:12–20

Luke 6:17–26

the focus in age-level materials

O God, nourish us in life so that we, your people, may bear the fruits of justice and peace to our communities and our world. Amen.

Blessings and Woes

Life that is grounded in God brings blessing. Like trees nourished by streams of water, we grow in faith as we join others who seek justice and live into the fullness of God's reign.

Jeremiah 17:5–10 Plant a rosebush in the desert and leave it for a few days, then plant another one in the garden where it is well-tended and watered. What happens to each? Jeremiah uses this imagery to describe both the people who fail to trust God and those who do.

Psalm 1 begins with the words, "Happy are those..." and is closely tied to themes found in the book of Proverbs and the Wisdom tradition. The feminine and creative spirit of Wisdom provides teachings that bring depth and meaning to the law and offers listeners a way of life that is full of justice and righteousness. Using the image of trees planted near streams of water, we are encouraged to bear good fruit.

Paul proclaims in **1 Corinthians 15:12–20** that we can bear the fruit of God's righteousness in our lives because of the resurrection of Christ. Since Christ has been raised from the dead, those grounded in Christ's promise can celebrate a new life. To Paul, there is strength for today in this future hope.

Luke 6:17–26 Imagine the scene: Jesus goes up a mountain to pray and stays all night. The next morning, he calls the disciples together and chooses twelve to be apostles (Luke 6:12–16). As they come down the mountain, an enormous healing-seeking crowd is waiting for them. In this group, there are other disciples, Jews (those noted as coming from Judea and Jerusalem), and Gentiles (those noted as coming from Tyre and Sidon). Jesus turns to the disciples and says, "Blessed are you."

In this way, the gospel of Luke begins Jesus' teaching with what is commonly called the Beatitudes. These sayings

are also recorded in Matthew 5:1–12. While Matthew has nine Beatitudes, Luke's four are followed by four corresponding woes. Poor/rich, hungry/full, weeping/laughing, and rejected/accepted form parallel pairings. Jesus' use of the word "you" in each statement suggests that the crowd included individuals living in each of these situations.

In Luke, these sayings of Jesus mark the beginning of a lengthy period of instruction for the disciples before Jesus sends them out on their own (9:6).

As named in Deuteronomy 11:26–28, Jesus' hearers would have considered blessing to be a sign of God's favour and woe a sign of God's disapproval or judgment. The ways that Bible translators have rendered these phrases offer additional insight for us. The phrase "blessed are" (NRSV) is translated in other Bible versions as "God will bless," "Happy are," and "You're blessed when." The phrase "woe to" (NRSV) is translated as "You're in for trouble," "How terrible for you," and "It's trouble ahead."

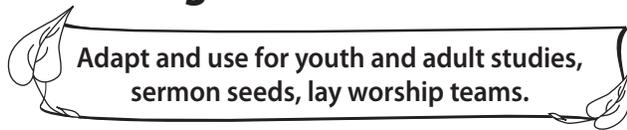
Jesus' message to those who would follow as disciples is one of astounding promise. For many in that crowd, these words may have seemed full of justice and mercy. For others, they may have seemed a harsh judgment. Jesus speaks prophetically of the great reversal of human understanding that we encounter in the reign of God. As Jesus continues to be revealed as a great teacher, his message continues to reveal the surprising way of God. The good news is not always easy to embrace and follow.

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There are blessings and woes in life, and God's people are not exempt. Trusting in God, we are blessed to bring healing and blessing to others, inviting them to participate in the vision offered in Jesus' teaching. What strengthens you to continue bearing such fruit?



Reflecting on the Word



Connecting with life

- **What brings you to a place of happiness or feeling blessed?**

Scripture

Jeremiah 17:5–10, and Psalm 1 speak about happiness found in trusting God.

- **What feelings do you get from trusting in God?**
- **When does your faith bring you to the point of serenity? When does it not?**

Both readings use the imagery of a tree planted by water.

- **Where are the parched places in your life? in the life of your congregation or community?**

Luke 6:17–26 Jesus begins to teach about the life of discipleship and turns conventional human understanding upside down.

- **What does Jesus' positioning (v. 17) reveal about the way of Jesus? the way of discipleship?**

Jesus describes the realm of God in a way that illustrates discipleship is not a single achievement but a way of living.

- **Does this feel discouraging or liberating for you?**
- **In your experience, how does your community view discipleship?**

Most of us would not view poverty or powerlessness or being ostracized as desirable states of being. It was no different in Jesus' time when he spoke these words. What could be good

news about poverty, hunger, or being hated? Moreover, Jesus concludes with a series of woes/troubles ahead for those who are rich, full, laughing...

- **How do we receive these words today?**
- **How do we hear the message "blessed are you who are poor," when so many live in poverty and struggle with the economic hardships of a pandemic, political unrest, or natural disasters?**

A woman from Chile said to a woman from North America, "We don't want you to give everything away. Don't become as us – we want to all have enough."

- **What does it mean to be a community where there is no difference between rich and poor?**

The Beatitudes show us how, in Jesus' mind, we are blessed both for what we are and are not, for what we have and will receive.

- **How are your blessings and giftedness a call to be connected to others?**

Connecting scripture and life

Most of the world continues to live in great poverty. The Beatitudes carry with them the message of both blessing and call to action as powerfully today as they did over 2000 years ago.

- **Where and how might you, individually and as a church, participate in the vision Jesus offers of a world of abundance, joy, and mercy for all?**

Focus for Worship, Learning, and Serving

Blessed are we who... There are many ways to consider ourselves blessed. But being blessed doesn't stop at receiving a blessing. The blessing goes beyond the gift. Our hearts are influenced by what we do. Therefore, how blessed or cursed we feel can be a result not of what we receive in life but what we give from it. Christ's love and teachings

are written on our hearts. The good news of the Sermon on the Plain is that our faith is not merely a call to ethics, it is a call to relationship with our communities, with our culture, and with God who is ever faithful to us as God's beloved children.



Blessings and Woes

Prepare

NOTE: All of these suggestions are mere starting points; adapt, delete, and add according to your local needs.

- ❑ Recruit volunteers needed for worship: two for the call to worship, four for the prayers of the people.
- ❑ Choose an option for hearing Luke 6:17–26. For the Bible story, arrange for a storyteller to present “[A Way of Blessing](#)” on p. 178, or “[God’s Blessings](#)” in Exploring Our Faith at the end of this week’s materials. For the creative reading, arrange for someone to insert the various translations of *makarios* and *ouai*.
- ❑ Bring items for setting the worship space.
- ❑ You might choose to print [The Beginning](#) on or in your bulletin (in the Images to Project and Print folder). For background to the art and artist, see “[Connecting with the Art](#)” on p. 8.
- ❑ Bring song such as “Sing of a Blessing” (*Seasons Songbook, vol. 2*, and #33 *Seasons Music CD, vol. 2*). Printed music and recording are also available at *Seasons* MP3 Downloads, www.seasonsonline.ca.
- ❑ Set [stations](#) as described on pp. 179–180.



Music Suggestions

I Am a Child of God

Bruce and Cheryl Harding; *Seasons Songbook, vol. 8*

The Greatest of These

Linnea Good; *Seasons Songbook, vol. 5*

Guide My Feet

Traditional African-American; *Seasons Songbook, vol. 2*

Sing of a Blessing

Miriam Therese Winter; *Seasons Songbook, vol. 2*

Heaven Shall Not Wait

John L. Bell

Where Streams Run Dry

Linnea Good



A chart that shows the licence holder(s) for each song in each of the 9 *Seasons of the Spirit* Music Volumes can be found at www.seasonsonline.ca. Click on Library; Seasons Music Information. Please contact a licence holder for permission to duplicate.

Gather

Call to worship

VOICE ONE: Blessed are those who follow God’s way.

VOICE TWO: They are like a tree planted by streams of water.

VOICE ONE: It does not fear when heat comes,

VOICE TWO: it is not anxious in times of drought.

VOICE ONE: Like such a tree, we trust in God.

VOICE TWO: We know that God always watches over us.

VOICE ONE: Come, let us worship God:

VOICE TWO: who is the source of life in all seasons.

Opening prayer

For two voices or call and response

ONE: Happy are you who speak to God, you shall be heard.

RESPONSE: **Bless us anew, O God.**

ONE: Happy are you who are honest with God, you shall be forgiven.

RESPONSE: **Bless us anew, O God.**

ONE: Happy are you who open up your real self, you shall be loved.

RESPONSE: **Bless us anew, O God.**

ONE: Happy are you who long for change, your living shall be renewed.

RESPONSE: **Bless us anew, O God.**

ONE: Happy are you who put yourself in God’s hands; you shall be held.

RESPONSE: **Bless us anew, O God.**

ONE: Happy are you who long for a fairer world, you shall be given vision.

RESPONSE: **Bless us anew, O God.**

ONE: Happy are you who seek God always; you shall be shown the way.

RESPONSE: **Bless us anew, O God.**

Prayer of confession

ONE: When we hoard things and do not share,

RESPONSE: **forgive us, loving God.**

ONE: When we think we have it made and do not need others,

RESPONSE: **forgive us, loving God.**

ONE: When we laugh at others’ misfortune, and say “it serves them right,”

RESPONSE: **forgive us, loving God.**

ONE: When we care more about what others think of us, than in doing what is right,



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RESPONSE: forgive us, loving God.

ONE: When we would rather follow our own way than yours,

RESPONSE: forgive us, loving God.

(silent prayer)

Words of affirmation

ONE: Blessed are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, but whose delight is in the law of God. Your sins are forgiven. Go and live in God's way.

RESPONSE: Thanks be to God!

Engage

Opening the word

Luke 6:17–26 *the focus scripture for age-level materials in ENCORE*

Choose from the following.

Bible story Have a storyteller present the story “[A Way of Blessing](#)” on p. 178. Alternatively, for younger children, tell the story “[God’s Blessings](#)” (in Exploring Our Faith at the end of this week’s materials).

Creative reading The Greek word *makarios* is generally translated blessed or happy, carrying the sense of one who has received God’s favour. The word *ouai*, generally translated as woe, is an interjection, like a strong “oh dear” or “alas.” Compare how the verses are translated in these sample versions:

Blessed are...; woe to you...

(New Revised Standard Version)

God will bless you...; but you are in for trouble...

(Contemporary English Version)

Happy are you...; How terrible for you...

(Common English Bible)

You’re blessed when...; it’s trouble ahead if...

(The Message)

Happy are you...; miserable are you...

(J.B. Phillips)

Blessed are you...; alas for you...

(New Jerusalem Bible)

Read the passage inserting the various ways the words *makarios*, *ouai* are translated... e.g.,

...Then he looked up at his disciples and said:

“Blessed, happy, are you...

But woe to you; you are in for trouble; miserable are you; alas for you...”

Invite children, young people, and all who wish to move to the stations. Others will remain seated for proclaiming the word.

Respond

After proclaiming the word, you might offer a general invitation to explore the stations, taking ten minutes or so with a chosen practice.

Sing or listen to a song such as “Sing of a Blessing” as people gather together again (*Seasons Songbook, vol. 2*, and #33 *Seasons Music CD, vol. 2*. Printed music and recording are also available at *Seasons* MP3 Downloads, www.seasonsonline.ca).

Prayers of the people

Arrange for four voices.

VOICE ONE: Gracious God, you call us to be like trees planted by streams of water. Planted firm in our faith, we offer you our praises. In our worship, we seek to glorify you – to tell through song and shouts of praise that you are a great and

loving God, that you bless us with your presence, and that we are overjoyed to be your people.

VOICE TWO: The fires of your passionate spirit burn within us. As we know, you care for all of your people, so we offer to you the concerns that are upon our hearts: for the sick and hurting, for the grieving and anxious, for the oppressed and downtrodden. We ask you to be with your people, all of your people – those we know and those we do not know. Help us all to feel your all-embracing love.

VOICE THREE: We trust in your presence, loving God. Help us share justly of our resources and be good and faithful stewards of all you have entrusted to us. And help us to share smiles, compassion, concern, forgiveness, and hope with those we meet each day.



VOICE FOUR: Help us never to forget your presence in our lives. May we sense you with us always, and so be moved to live in your ways. Help us to have faith in you, that like trees planted by the water. Our faith is grounded in the knowledge of your love for us. Amen.

Prayer of dedication or offering prayer

May these gifts be consolation for all who are in need.
May we be more blessed by the giving than we have been blessed in receiving.

And may we desire only the power of Christ's resurrecting love. Amen.

Bless

ONE: Go. Bless and be blessed.

Go. Love and be loved.

Go. Renew and be renewed.

RESPONSE: We will go with God's blessing to the world.

Special Day Commentary

February 15 – Nirvana Day (*Buddhism*)

This day commemorates the death of the Buddha, which is also the day he achieved nirvana or total enlightenment. While celebrations vary according to region and culture, Buddhists generally observe the day by meditating or going to Buddhist temples or monasteries. Often special food is prepared. Some people bring gifts to the temple or monastery, such as money, household goods, or clothes. Some Buddhists will read passages from the Parinibbana Sutta, which describes Buddha's last days, while others may reflect on those who have recently passed away.



Blessings and Woes Expo

This experiential event could happen in fellowship time after worship, or at a separate event, perhaps in conjunction with a potluck meal. It intends to provide a graphic link between the blessings and woes of Luke 6:20–26 with real living.

Provide six stations around the room or in different rooms, each representing a different verse. Invite people to tour the stations. Adapt the activities at each station to suit programs and issues relevant to your church.

Station 1: Blessed are the poor

Provide information on local or global campaigns responding to poverty. This could be a trade campaign or debt relief project. Provide postcards with addresses, phone numbers, websites for further information.

Station 2: Blessed are the hungry

Provide information on ways people can get involved in a local campaign to feed communities. Provide lists of items needed by local food banks or food pantries and information on how people can volunteer with such programs.

Station 3: Blessed are those who weep

Highlight bereavement support groups. Provide stories of change where people have wept but now laugh, people who were hungry but can now provide food and education for their families. Produce these stories on cards people can take away, read, and meditate on.

Station 4: Woe to you who are rich

Provide information about simpler living, ways to reduce waste, and information about issues such as unemployment, fair trade, or welfare reform. Provide commitment cards for people's talents and ask people to list skills they are willing to share with others in the congregation through a talent drive or some other mechanism.

Station 5: Woe to you who are full

Provide information about volunteer programs in your community, as well as programs where people can mentor others or be companions to others (accompanying immigrants to government offices to help them wend their way through paperwork, for example).

Station 6: Woe to you who laugh now

Provide information on programs to help build self-esteem: self-help programs, groups promoting tolerance, anti-racism groups, and so on.



A Way of Blessing

Based on Luke 6:17–23

The word of God was spreading everywhere Jesus went! And everywhere Jesus went the crowds grew and grew. It was now time for Jesus to show more in his actions and tell more in his words about God’s abundant blessings.

Jesus went to a level place. And his friends followed. And the people came from near and far from the edges of everywhere to touch him and be healed.

When all the people crowded around, there were still more. And they came closer too...closer to try and touch Jesus... closer to hear what he had to say...closer to be touched by his words and actions.

And this is what Jesus had to say to them all.

*If you feel very small inside,
be happy.
God’s love is yours.*

*If you feel sad inside,
be happy.
God will help you feel better.*

*If you think you are not very smart,
be happy.
God has a promise for you.*

*if you try very hard to be good,
be happy.
God will help you feel good inside.*

*If you care about other people,
be happy.
God cares about you.*

*If you try hard to work for peace,
be happy.
God says, “You are my child.”*

*If people are mean to you because you love God,
be happy.
You will always be part
of God’s family.*

In this way, the people heard God’s word from Jesus that day. It was strange. It seemed that everything was turned upside-down. But that was the wondrous thing about God’s way, a way of fairness, a way of equality, a way of blessed balance.

*Words in italics from “Jesus Teaches” in Lectionary Story Bible: Year C
by Ralph Milton. Copyright © 2009 Wood Lake Publishing Inc.*

A recording of this story is available in MP3 format in the Audio Stories folder.



Bible story

Materials

- Basic supplies
- Paper or drawing pads
- Recording of today’s story “[A Way of Blessing](#)”
- Alternatively, arrange for a storyteller to present the story



The practice of storytelling

Directions

1. Listen to the story “A Way of Blessing.”
2. Use the art supplies to draw and write your response to the story.



Living, Learning, Growing as Disciples

The following stations might be set up around your worship space, or in other places around the church, in your home, or outdoors. Choose one or more practices, depending on your space and numbers. Display the directions for all to see. Adapt stations for use when physically distancing and above all, follow the safe practices of your congregation and local health officials.

For your convenience, directions are formatted for printing and available in the Stations folder.

Health and Safety Practices



Basic supplies pens, pencils, markers, crayons, white glue/glue sticks, scissors, hand sanitizer, wipes placed in a basket or bin, two containers marked “clean” and “used”



Setting the space Utilize large spaces where people can maintain a safe physical distance. Spread out chairs around a large table or use tape to mark off the space around stand alone chairs.



Keep it clean Wipe down and disinfect places used for stations. Provide enough arts and crafts supplies to reduce sharing and mark containers “clean” and “used.” Remind people to use hand sanitizer as they begin and as they end stations.

Giving blessings

Materials

- Basic supplies
- Bibles or copies of Luke 6:17-27
- Copy or two of your church directory
- Calendar



Suitable for all ages

The practice of caring for others

Directions

At the top of a piece of paper (held horizontally), write “Giving Blessings Calendar.”

1. Below this title, create a calendar for this week (Monday – Sunday) with three rows and seven columns. Write the day/date in the first column.
2. Think about the “Beatitudes” in Luke 6:17-27 and pick a “blessed are...” or “happy are...” phrase to write in each column in the second row.
3. Now, think about each of these beatitudes and how you might personally be a blessing to the people mentioned in each one.
4. In the third column, write down an activity you will do to be a blessing this week. For example, if you wrote “blessed are you who are poor,” your activity might be giving away gently used clothes to a clothing bank or donating to an organization addressing poverty. If you wrote, “blessed are you who weep,” your activity might be sending a handwritten note to someone who recently lost a loved one or taking a friend out to lunch who has been laid off from work.
5. Take your calendar home with you and place it somewhere you’ll see it to remind you to give blessings to others this week.

Younger children Help younger children create a calendar and think of ways they might be blessings to others in their lives. Aligning each “blessed are...” might be difficult, but don’t hesitate to suggest simpler ideas like praying for the poor or being nice to people who are sad as activities.

Giving Blessings Calendar		
DATE	BEATITUDE	ACTION
MON.		
TUES.		
Wed.		
Thurs.		
Fri.		
Sat.		
Sun.		



Blessing jars

Materials

- Basic supplies
- Small empty jars
- Tough depressors/craft sticks (10–15 per person)
- Washi tape
- Stickers
- Ribbon



Suitable for all ages with
help for non-readers

The practice of being thankful

Directions

1. Decorate your blessing jars and one end of each stick using the markers, washi tape, stickers, and ribbons.
2. On one side of each stick, write or draw a blessing in your life. On the other side, write a word or short phrase about how that blessing affects or changes you.
3. Place your blessing sticks in the jar and take the jar home with you. Each day this week, take some of the blessing sticks out of your jar and recall your blessings in a time of prayer.

Blessing messages

Materials

- Basic supplies
- Multi-coloured heart shapes
- Stickers



Suitable for ages
working together

The practice of being a blessing

Directions

1. Write “You are blessed” on the multi-coloured heart shapes.
2. Decorate with markers and stickers.
3. After worship, go together to place the heart shapes in hymnals and or pew Bibles for a blessing surprise the next time the congregation gathers.

Creating a stable

Materials

- Basic supplies
- Plastic or florist foam base glued to a block of wood for each person
- Construction paper/heavy paper
- Pipe cleaners
- Transparent tape



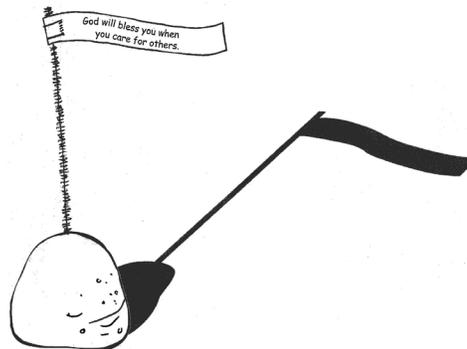
Suitable for
all ages

The practice of showing love

Directions

Talk together about how we bring happiness (be a blessing) to others, such as love others, give food to the hungry. Make a list for all to see.

1. With ideas from the list, write a blessing for yourself or a friend, such as “Blessed are you when you love others” or “Blessed are you when you give food to the hungry” on a strip of construction paper or card stock. The size will depend upon the size of the finished stable.
2. Tape the blessing to one end of the pipe cleaner or a piece of fine wire.
3. Push the pipe cleaner or wire into the base of your stable.



The article “[Connecting with the Art](#)” on page 8 provides background to this season’s posters and art engagement ideas for individuals and groups. You might add an Art station and select one of the art engagement ideas.



God's Blessings

A story based on Luke 6:17-22

People. People. People. Everywhere you looked, you could see people. There were mothers and fathers. There were children and babies. There were grandparents and uncles and aunties. There were sad people and hurting people. There were sick people and lonely people. There were poor people and hungry people. Everyone had come to see Jesus. They had heard how kind and gentle Jesus was, and they all hoped that he could help them.

Jesus looked around. He could see the hurt in many people's faces. Jesus wanted to listen to them. Jesus wanted to give them God's blessing. He turned to his disciples and said,

"Look at the hurting people who have no money. When you are poor, you will know God's blessings. God doesn't want anyone to be without what they need.

Look at the hurting people who do not have enough food. When you are hungry, you will know God's blessing. God doesn't want anyone to go without food.

Look at the hurting people who are crying. When you are sad, you will know God's blessing. God doesn't want anyone to be sad.

Look at the hurting people who feel they have no friends. When you are lonely, you will know God's blessing. God wants everyone to be cared for by their friends."

The disciples thought about what Jesus said. Jesus was teaching them how to live together with love. When everyone has food, clothes, a place to live, and everyone has a friend, everyone will be so happy that everyone will jump for joy!

As you decorate this page, wonder about what Jesus might be saying to these children. What might the children be saying to Jesus?

Wonder



Being Blessed, Being a Blessing

God blesses each of us in and through Creation and people around us. Each of us can be a blessing in the world. When we do loving things for others, we spread God's blessing. When others do loving things for us, we are blessed.

- **Think of people and situations where you can be a blessing. Think of times when you are blessed.**
- **Use words and pictures to fill in the boxes to complete each of the following sentences.**

I am a blessing when...

--	--

I am blessed when...

--	--

