

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable to you O God, my strength and my joy... Amen.

Tomorrow is officially the first day of spring... Yet, from the looks of it outside, it seems that spring is far, far away...

Especially, if all you are looking for is the snow laden ground, the ice, the cold temperatures, and the icky weather forecasts... You will keep missing the truth... That spring, well starting tomorrow, is officially here.

We find this truth in the longer daylight hours, the migrations of birds that has already started, the slow thawing of lakes and rivers, the subtly warming of temperatures overall, and the hope that we cling to...

That the snow will melt, the ice will dissipate, and that daffodils and crocuses will soon push their way up and out into our world.

Of course, there will still be more cold days in the months that lie ahead... And in Wisconsin, there is always the possibility of more and more snow... But winter is coming to an end.

And in a few weeks Lent will also be coming to an end...

A time we have set aside intentionally journeying together. A time to prepare our minds, hearts, and bodies for Holy Week and Christ's journey to the cross and beyond.

A time with intentionality by doing the hard work—noticing what is going on both inside of us and what is going on around us.

And today's gospel takes a long hard look at just that.

As today's gospel asks the question... What are you looking for?

It asks this question by calling us to pay attention and notice what things we choose to see, because our intentions make all the difference in how we experience life.

And to embrace this intentionality, we then need to be intentional as we read through this long gospel.

As a quick read through it, might bring one to the conclusion that this gospel is about physical sight and Jesus performing miracles...

But in reality, the focus is more nuanced than this.

This gospel sheds light on how God's grace meets us in the mud and in the dirt, in the places we might not think to look.

Or in the places we might be too stubborn to see... Stubbornness and ignorance that we see take root in our gospel today...

For example, after the blind man is healed, we discover that some people think the man in question is a completely different person than the blind man...

Then after that, some people are upset that he was healed on the sabbath...

Then after that they come up with another conspiracy saying that the man was never blind, and even call in his parents in for questioning...

Then after that, they are still convinced that this man is someone so sinful that they drive him out.

Never once does the community rejoice that he is healed. Never once does the community see what God is doing...

Instead, the community sees all the things that are wrong in their eyes...

They are only looking for problems... And they are only trying to catch people making mistakes and doing something wrong, like healing on the sabbath...

Showing that the community is blind, as they are not able to see God in their midst...

Not blind of course in the physical sense, but in their ignorance and stubbornness in how they view the world.

They are not open to change or transformation. They do not welcome new insight. They do not even recognize that they too are broken and flawed...

Because to be broken and flawed is hard to own.

Yet, there is good news even in this... As Christ took on our brokenness...

Brokenness that we are reminded of every Sunday, when we hear his sacred words... This is my body broken for you.

Because Christ recognizes in his very body, the humanity of each person.

By taking the time to be broken again and again, for you.

Christ meets you in your brokenness and then fills you with God's love and grace.

Love and grace that then weaves transformation and healing into your very being...

Healing, that may look different than what we expect or want. As God's healing expands our understanding of what it means to be healed.

Because the blind man receives more than a physical healing, as it was more than his sight that was restored.

His true healing opened him up in such a radical way, as he is the only one who saw God in his midst.

Which he received through God's grace. Grace that came from mud...

As Jesus scooped up the dirt and made mud, showing that from the ground, from the earth, from the very places we live and breathe, that God's grace meets us even there.

As it is here, on the earth and in the earth that God can open our eyes again and again, pouring out on us grace upon grace.

Such joyous news... Good news that we as Christians seek... Which if we take the gospel seriously, we do not have to look very far.

Which brings us back to this question, what are you looking for?

And begs one to further ask, are you open to God's transforming grace?

Because what you are looking for and what you see, can be transformed by God's grace.

And it is through this good news that life can take on new meaning...

Which can be found even in the simplest of examples...

Do you see the snow as the dragging on of winter, or as physical reminder that we are part of an extensive water cycle system that connects every living breathing being on the world together?

Or another example... Do you see your dirty dishes as an annoyance and a bother? Or do you see them as a gift that you have food and running water to clean them?

After all it is in the dirt and the places not so shiny that God's grace can be revealed.

Of course, not all things can be boiled down to simple examples, as life is complex and complicated...

But it does bring up an important point, that there is always another way to look at things...

And our gospel today sheds light on just that...

That even in the places unexpected, like in ashes and in dirt, God can be revealed.

Because God's grace is always in our midst.

God's grace seeps into every corner of creation, saving grace and life-giving grace, that is, for you.

And it is my prayer this week, that you can see God's grace when you need it. That you can share God's grace with others.

And that every day... you can look for and find God's grace and love unfolding in your midst... Amen.