

Let us pray... God our Creator, true source of wisdom, whom all life flows, plant your word in our hearts today. May your truth take root and may your grace blossom in this place, cracking open the seed of love and blessing this space between us... Amen.

In our reading from Genesis, we heard these words... "I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing."

Such beautiful words...

But I have to wonder, how over time, this passage has become transformed.

And I wonder how many people throw around the term blessed without absorbing its meaning or acknowledge the source from where it flows and the responsibility that comes with blessings...

Because blessings are different than being grateful for something. And blessings are different than praising God for something...

As Kate Bowler describes, "The act of blessing is the strange and vital work of noticing what is true about God and ourselves."

And I would add, that blessings are found in our relationship with God, revealing how God is present among us...

Because the words of blessing, spoken to Abraham and Sarah, were spoken by a God who knew the truth about Abraham and Sarah... They, like all of us, are not perfect...

And yet, God remained faithful... God did not give up on Abraham and Sarah, even when they strayed or made mistakes. God continued to bless them, even in the rawness of the world, for it is there where God's love lingers.

Love that is transformative and cultivates blessings...

Because blessings are not meant for you to keep to yourself... God is relying on you to share them with others...

Just like the words we heard at the start of the service from the prophet Jeremiah... Blessed are those who trust in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord. They shall be like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots by the stream...

As God's blessings root you and they bear fruit in you...

Which in turn generates more blessings for others, blossoming from love and relationship born out of each blessing.

Blessings that I have experienced with so many of you, and also with our confirmation students, Sam and Ty.

Who have been a blessing to all of us. Watching them grow in faith, embracing their kindness, hearing their wisdom...

Witnessing the gifts that the Spirit is nurturing in them...

And observing how they are called with purpose.

A purpose that has deepened through their confirmation studies and community work.

Times that were blessed by God... Not because they were perfect, or easy, or Pinterest post worthy.

These times were blessed, because we showed up for each other and we acknowledged God's presence.

Blessing us with conversations even when we were tired and burnt out...

Blessing us even when we lamented the difficulties in the world...

Because every moment is an opportunity to bless what is and to bless the space between us.

Which crack open conversations on God's love and grace...

Revealing that we can both receive and share God's grace again and again and again....

Which transforms us to be a blessing to others...

And when we take time to recognize the lives we are living with honesty and without judgment... We can see how God is at work in the most tender of spaces...

As it is here God's blessings shine through, even when life is hard or difficult.

And just like we heard in our gospel... Jesus knows the complexities of life, for he ate with sinners and tax collectors, taking time to be present with them and loving them...

Which is the same love that you are embraced into, where God immerses you in forgiveness, grace, and blessings.

Filling you to the brim, so you know without a doubt that you are called with purpose...

And if there are days you don't feel filled with God's grace or blessings, know that you are not forgotten... That the Spirit is in your midst revealing ways to fuel you up, that may just surprise you...

And on the days you are overflowing from God's grace and blessings, I hope you find the courage to shower the world with your fruit...

For you are a blessing to others, and you are called to embrace God's love, and share it with the world... Amen.