

Let us pray... May the words of my mouth and the mediations of my heart be acceptable to you O God my creator and my redeemer... Amen.

Growing up, my parents kitchen sink had one of those faucet sprayers next to the main faucet...

You know the old black ones attached to the clear-ish hose that went under the sink so when you needed to you could pull it out, aim where you wanted, and then press down on the little handle, and water would spray out.

Well one April fools I discovered a trick... Now I didn't dare play this on my parents, but I decided to play it on my younger sister...

The trick involved putting a piece of clear plastic tape around the sprayer handle, so that when the water was turned on it wouldn't come from the faucet, instead it would shoot out from sprayer, going directly out and over the sink and onto the unexpected victim.

Mind you my sister and I were much shorter back then, which meant the spray head was pretty much level to our faces...

So I got everything set up, tape holding down the handle, sprayer set forward, and then I asked my sister to get me a glass of water...

Needless to say, my sister didn't get me glass of water to drink... After she figured out what was going on, that glass of water, also ended up in my face...

Getting a glass of water in the face, like you often see portrayed in movies, is a form of shock...

And our Gospel reading is kind of like that – a cold slap of water right in our faces...

And I think that's the point, I think shock is what Jesus was going for.

Especially since our Gospel today picks up directly from last Sunday, when Jesus was holding a small child, telling his disciples how important it is to care for our neighbors and especially those who are most vulnerable in society.

A message – that can be hard to hear – and easier to tune out...

So this Sunday, we still have Jesus with a small child in his lap trying to make his disciples pay attention by saying something completely out of character.

Because I don't believe that Jesus really wants us to maim ourselves, after all Jesus has been going around healing the blind, the deaf, the sick, and the injured.

Rather Jesus wants us to pay attention to what he is saying... Especially since what he is saying is hard to hear...

Jesus is asking his disciples – and by his disciples I mean us – to pay attention to what makes us stumble.

This is hard reflective work... Probably something most of us don't want to hear, which is why Jesus uses the approach he does... Waking us up with a cold glass of water to our faces making sure we pay attention.

Because each of us has things that make us stumble...

And even though Jesus does not go easy on us in this Gospel, he does offer the tiniest bit of grace at the end...

Jesus says, "Salt is good; but if salt has lost its saltiness, how can you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another."

Essentially, Jesus is saying... The purpose of salt is to be salty...

Similarly, you were created with purpose.

Meaning, Jesus wants you to pay attention to your purpose...

But to pay attention to your purpose, also means you need to pay attention to your stumbling blocks...

As our stumbling blocks keep us from living our purpose and what God calls us to do.

And Jesus could have chosen anything to make this point, as we all know Jesus likes to speak in parables... But Jesus chooses something specific, straight forward and to the point... salt.

Which I find so interesting especially after working in the restaurant business for many years...

Salt is used to enhance dishes, to make the uniquely individual ingredients shine in a way that compliments the entire dish...

Which is a beautiful image for God's creation...

As God created a world filled with individual people, plants, animals, and minerals, all of which are held together in God's love...

Love that calls us to shine – by creating us with purpose – so we can help others shine – just like salt does when it is added in the right way to a dish...

And also unique to salt – is the fact that it cannot lose its flavor – it's a stable compound... However, you can dilute salt, taking away its saltiness.

Similarly, you can never lose your purpose... Even when life seems to dilute you down, causing you to stumble, and lose hope...

But the thing about hope, is that it is never lost.

It lingers with us and can be found hidden in plain sight, in the tiniest grain of salt...

Hope comes to us when we need it, when we least expect it, from the grace of God.

As that is what God's grace is all about – God's grace holds all of creation together in hope and in love.

So you can embark on each new day by living your purpose while loving others.

Jesus calls us to have salt in ourselves as a reminder that this is something we need to do each day... Just like we eat each day and add salt to our food, we live each day, because it is in the living we fulfil our call.

It's not a call to perfectionism nor is it a race – it's about walking humbly with God...

Because when we walk with God, we don't stumble as much...

And when we do stumble Christ is there with forgiveness and grace.

So we can shine bright, full of flavor, filled with purpose, bursting with joy and love from our Lord... Amen.