Sermon: Proper 26A
Title: Prisms
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I have a little light catcher hanging in the window of my office. It is a prism – a piece of glass, cut with innumerable triangular "faces" or facets. When the sunlight comes through the window, and shines through that prism, dozens of wee tiny rainbows are visible on the walls and floor of my office.

The science behind it is simple: sunlight contains many colors, but our human eyes mix those colors together. So that light just looks "white." The prism bends those various light waves, so that we are able to perceive the colors that were always present there. I invite you to come to my office some sunny day, because it is a sight to behold.

This morning we read the opening of Jesus' famous sermon – the Sermon on the Mount. These nine blessings we call the beatitudes. As beloved as these lines are, we have to be a little mindful when we read them. If we are not careful, they can sound transactional: "If you do this, you will get that."

And one thing I know absolutely about God' love is that it is not transactional. It is a gift freely given. We cannot earn more of it, and we can't blow it and lose it. And thank God for that.

The beatitudes are not transactional. Rather, I believe, they are revelatory. It is not "you get this for that." It is "this points to that." And not just for these people who are suffering in this specific way, but for all of us.

The first line of each of the "blessings" is a statement of human condition. Each blessed group, the "Blessed are those who…" does not describe one distinct group of people but a specific condition. And they are conditions with which we all can relate.

Each of us has had seasons in our lives when our posture toward the world was meek: low self-esteem, lack of confidence, of just feeling beaten down by the brutality of life

Each of us can remember a time when we were filled with the hurricane force wind of righteousness.

And every person in this room has lost their moorings in the flood waters of mourning. And every one of us is blessed. Because in as much as we all experience all of these things, God is still blessing all of us.

We are blessed when we are merciful
We are blessed when we are persecuted.

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Because we are always in some season of our lives. And we are always blessed. Blessed are all of us: whether we are happy or sad, suffering or content. Blessed are you, children of God, just **because** you are children of God.

The second half of each blessing is the revelatory part. These lines give an insight into the brilliance of the love of God. Blessed are you when you are pure of heart, your actions make God tangible. Blessed are you who are mourning, you are a reminder of God's comforting presence

I imagine we have all been in the presence of a person who was feeling "poor in spirit," perhaps having a crisis of faith, or feeling abandoned by God. And in seeking to address that sense of scarcity, have you not been made aware of the abundance of God's love?

I imagine we have all known people who have been teased and derided, or worse, because of their faith in Jesus. And in the experiences of that person, have we not been made aware of the greatness of the promises of the Kingdom made in the life and work of Christ?

Each of us, each day of our lives, is journeying through unknowable challenges and blessings. And whether they are difficult or delightful, we are under the hand of our loving God and we are blessed. And we are also a blessing.

This is what I mean by revelatory.

Each of us, in every journey of our lives: reveals the compassion of Jesus; makes visible the abundance of the Holy Spirit; surfaces the justice of the Kingdom.

Each of us is a prism with innumerable experiences and conditions. And as the light of this mortal world passes through us, we make the brilliance of God's love visible to our weak and human eyes.

But here is the catch. This only works if we are looking. You can stand in my office in brilliant sunlight and overlook the rainbows all around you.

In order for these blessings to be revealed, we must be looking at one another. And not just looking but **seeing.** We must be listening to one another and not just listening but **caring.** We must be present with one another and not just present but alert, attentive – **compassionate**.

Everyone we know, everyone around us, is experiencing something. Sometimes these things are heartbreaking. Sometimes, even if they are joyful, they are triggering.

It is easier to look away from the person experiencing homelessness than to turn toward them and see how God is showing up for and in them. It is easier not to acknowledge the loss a friend is feeling than to turn toward them and see how God restores their dignity.

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And this turning toward, this seeing and hearing and being alert, is not just an idea or a suggestion from a bishop. It is a promise that you have already made with God. It is in our baptismal covenant: Will you seek and serve Christ in all people? ***I will with God's help.***

What if we did? What if we did seek to see God in every person in our lives? To turn toward people who are suffering, to rejoice with people who are celebrating? What if we were to actively look for the work of God revealed in the lives of every single person we meet?

How much more present would God feel? How much easier would it be to walk in faith? How many more rainbows would we notice on the walls and ceilings and floors of our lives?

God is working through every single one of us regardless of our condition. We don't have to do a single thing to be the prism. God has already done that, by blessing every one of us right where we are.

Blessed are you who mourn
Blessed are you who are hungry and thirsty
Blessed are you who are joyous
Blessed are you who are healthy and well

We don't have to do a single thing to be the prism.

But to see the brilliance of God's love in its myriad diversity, we have to look at one another. We have to be in community with one another. We have to seek Christ in every person, and love our neighbors as ourselves.

Blessed are all of us who are journeying through life, for we make God's love visible. Amen.

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