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Epiphany 4, Year A
Grace, River Forest
2/1/2026

Blessed Foolishness

Let's see how this fits together, shall we? There are certain places I love to travel to but where I always feel like a visitor no matter how many times I've been there. The lay of the land doesn't agree with me. And certain spaces and people, no matter how often I'm around them I feel out of sorts. We know that we can be strangers in many places, familiar and not. You might say, "this just doesn't fit with my vibe."

I know many of you have an editor's eye, which I am grateful for as someone with the gift of gab but not necessarily grammar. Some folks can scan a document and within seconds spot a word that doesn't work in a particular piece of writing. It doesn't match with what the author is communicating. It doesn't fit.

Words are complicated and powerful things. Words create worlds. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" and later: "Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of justice, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

There is the line in the Lord's Prayer "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on *earth* as in Heaven." Is kingdom the right translation for that word in the 21st century? Some have replaced it with the "dominion of God", but I don't know about that. I like "reign of God"- but we do not have monarchs or kings here. How about the "empire of God or Empire of Heaven?"

None of these *words* seem to get to the jarring nature of what this regime or rule actually brings into being and makes reality. It doesn't do justice to the kind of world it creates. All our messages from today? It doesn't take long to see that they just don't fit into the world as it is. They are messages from another realm. They are starkly out of place when juxtaposed with all that we see going on out there. I guess they've always been. But it's glaring this morning.

Jesus sits down among us, with everything swirling around within and without, and begins to teach. He doesn't present life advice or "be happy in 9 easy steps."

It is promise not prescription. Gospel not law. He announces where the triune God can always be found. This God who chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; weak in the world to shame the strong. You can always trust this God.

Beyond words- He is the word. The beatitudes made flesh. The blessed one.

Throughout his life he comes alongside the poor in spirit as one of them. Fully identifying with despised, despairing, rejected, the humble not the haughty. He weeps over the city and the grave of a friend. Still mourns with you. Moving closer still. He is meek, not mighty. Comes with cross not crown. Friend of sinners among the lost and forsaken, crossing religious boundaries to reach them - he is pure in heart. The one who makes peace by laying down his life. His ways have never fit here- they led to his death. Reviled by the powerful, a threat to empire, his words vindicated in his resurrection. Back from the dead he still speaks the confounding word of forgiveness. Something the world still doesn't understand. Reconciliation not revenge. He's never fit in this world but persists nonetheless. You belong to this God. You will never outgrow this embrace.

So- blessed are you. When you don't fit in or when you feel like you just take up space and people look past you. When you feel like a stranger in your own house or country. Blessed are you when you are broken open. Blessed are you when you fail again. Blessed are you when you don't have the right words. When your doubts multiply. When you feel like giving up. When you are lost. When your strength has been depleted. Blessed are you when you limp along into another day. When you don't have it together and have given up on the ideal a thousand times. Blessed are you when you are at the end of yourself because God is still there with you and will walk with you into a future that you could not create on your own. Blessed are you because God has not and will not abandon you. Blessed are you because you are saved by grace alone.

I don't have great spatial intelligence, (so lets see how this goes) so getting pieces to fit together to build something is not my expertise. There is so much that we try to fit under the banner: kingdom of God these days. Personal piety that puffs up. Habits that we confuse for holy. So many calculating words. Words about defending the homeland and protecting the powerful. Under the illusion of blessing.

Micah makes it plain. Do justice. Love mercy. Walk humbly. Serve your neighbor. Personally and collectively. Seek justice- you who have been justified by someone else's work. Be devoted to steadfast, covenantal, enduring love. Midwife the ending of old patterns that harm and exclude so new life can emerge. Tread lightly. Be gentle. Stay Fierce. Do the next right thing.

Until all the world is a fit habitation for all the blessed ones who come in the name of the Lord. It's so much more than whatever word we use for it, we know it when we see it. It is given as gift. Christ is given for you. You are blessed.

