

asking for the gift of seeing more fully, more clearly. You may want to plant something in this earth at the end of the week.

- Take 15-30 minutes each day, looking around you attentively. What do you see, hear, or feel? Allow the space to unfold into layer after layer of detail. What is the difference between your first “look” and your last?

- Is there a prejudice, a judgment, an anger, a denial that you would like to be healed of now? Who might help you do that?

Lent 4: Earth

John 9:1-41

Additional passages: **1 Samuel 16:1-13; Psalm 23; Ephesians 5:8-14**

If God does not weep, then there is no love deep enough to touch the pain.

If God does not get close, then there is no love real enough to meet our brokenness.

If God does not touch, then there is no love earthy enough to value our humanness.

– Roddy Hamilton

Gather & Center

Prepare the worship table, overlaying the purple drape with a piece of green cloth, symbolizing new opportunity. Fill the bowl with earth or potting soil. When everyone is gathered, light the candle and start the Lent 3 segment of the video, joining in the following prayer. Pause as directed or whenever you wish to take time for discussion.

God of the fragments,
you gather us up and set us carefully into the mosaic of the universe,
you care that each of us has a place,
you build us together to be a vision of *shalom*.
We celebrate that we are a piece of your beloved creation.
Help us see ourselves with your eyes of hope.

Enter & Engage

Before restarting the video, read aloud John 9:1-41. Pause the video for discussion as you wish.

Ask Yourself

Use these questions and suggestions to invite discussion, prayer, and reflection.

1. Read John 9:2. When have you found yourself blaming someone or something – others, your past, the government, circumstances – for painful experiences or events? Have you ever wanted to challenge God directly, to demand an explanation? What would you ask if you got the chance?
2. Jesus responds to the disciples in John 9:3. How does his answer comfort you? Confuse? Intrigue? Challenge?
3. Read John 9:13-17, 24-34. When have you experienced seeing something in a new way? What sparked the epiphany? Do you remember feeling different in any way after the event? Did you try to share the experience with others? If so, how did they respond?
4. In what ways are you aware that you don't see as clearly as you would wish? Perhaps there is someone close to you whose behavior is a mystery, or you know you are judgmental rather than compassionate. If Jesus were to touch your eyes and send you to wash, what "sight" would you hope to gain?

5. The Rev. Martin Copenhaver wrote, "To me, the affirmation that God can be found outside of a church has never seemed like much of a claim. The true wonder is that God can be found inside a church, among quirky, flawed and broken people who have little in common and yet are bound to one another." Reread 1 Samuel 16:1-13. How easy – or difficult – is it for you to remain "bound to one another" when your ego is bruised or you feel rejected? What empowers you to be centered and in community?

Ponder & Pray

Gather near the worship table. Invite each person to leave an imprint of her or his finger in the earth, taking time to offer a silent or spoken prayer of healing for his or her own places of "not seeing." Spend a moment in silence as you take leave of the mosaic *Hand of Jesus*. Then pray the following in unison.

God of the fragments,
grant me clarity to see the last grain of dust that finally forms
Being,
the firing of the last synapse that finally pulses into heartbeat,
the ultimate molecule of water that finally satisfies thirst,
the light anointing the single drop of oil
that is your blessing drenching me with grace.
Amen. Amen. Amen.

Another Step

During this week, spend time each day sitting quietly with the image *Hand of Jesus* as your guide and companion. Read the lections assigned for the Fourth Sunday in Lent (see p. 1). Add a bowl or pot of soil to your sacred space. Touch your own closed eyes as you pray,