

"To The Brim"
Jan. 20, 2019

Isaiah 62:1-5

62:1 For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until her vindication shines out like the dawn, and her salvation like a burning torch. 62:2 The nations shall see your vindication, and all the kings your glory; and you shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the LORD will give. 62:3 You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God. 62:4 You shall no more be termed Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate; but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her, and your land Married; for the LORD delights in you, and your land shall be married. 62:5 For as a young man marries a young woman, so shall your builder marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

12:1 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. 12:2 You know that when you were pagans, you were enticed and led astray to idols that could not speak. 12:3 Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says "Let Jesus be cursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit. 12:4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; 12:5 and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; 12:6 and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. 12:7 To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 12:8 To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, 12:9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 12:10 to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. 12:11 All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.

John 2:1-11

2:1 On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. 2:2 Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. 2:3 When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." 2:4 And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come." 2:5 His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." 2:6 Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. 2:7 Jesus said to them, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. 2:8 He said to them, "Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward." So they took it. 2:9 When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom 2:10 and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now." 2:11 Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

When fishermen get together they swap 'the one that got away' stories, golfers tell about that perfect shot and the rare hole in one, social media buzzes with whatever is "trending." When pastors get together they swap wedding stories. Wedding stories are a part of every pastor's lore. From late bridal parties to clueless grooms to fainting attendants and all of those little precious but completely out of control ring bearers and flower girls who look so cute in the pictures but can bring a wedding to a crying halt at any second. I apologize, but the consensus amongst pastors is that they'd rather do a funeral anytime ... if it wasn't so hard on the family.

Make you wonder if this story, of the wedding in Cana in Galilee, was a 'wedding story' amongst these early preachers and evangelist who are out there spreading the word about Jesus? Is this John's offering when it's his turn to tell a wedding tale? This is a story that's used in many different ways. Most of the time it provides the fodder for wedding homilies and some light hearted reflections which help to cast a positive light on marriage and the fact that Jesus himself came as a guest to a wedding in Cana -- so surely we can place him on the guest list at our weddings.

And of course great fun has been had with what seems to be some tension between Jesus, who according to John, isn't ready to be "out there" yet, and Mary who has known since the angels sang and shepherds and wise men showed up that Jesus is pretty special and it's past time for him to get

things going. She wants something to happen to help ol' cousin Benjamin, the bridegroom, out of an embarrassing situation, she also knows that Jesus can certainly make that happen.

And at this point some of that wedding lore begins to emerge. John could have told us 'Jesus turned water into wine' and all were amazed. But he gives us the details. Servants filling six large jars whose common purpose was to provide water for ritual washing, which most likely means what Jesus wants in those jars is fresh water, and they are filled to the brim. There's no hocus pocus or magic formula or even a wave of his hand. Just as soon as they are filled he tells them to fill a carafe and give it to the chief steward. (UH, who remembers the stewards name at your wedding? Chief steward indicates the presence of lesser stewards. Caterers I guess.) Anyway, this guy tastes it and finds out it's not that 4 buck a bottle stuff, it's the "reserve" from the year BC 12... a very good year. And when the steward tastes it he slaps the groom on the back and says, 'you rascal, they've drunk every case we brought and they are just about bleary eyed and you -- you bring out the good stuff.' And of course the good stuff is the life we all hope for the couple.

The last line of John's telling of the story is: Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

Here is this small group of characters who had, in truth, just started hanging out with Jesus. Here are the disciples, who although unnamed here, as of course are the bride and groom, are probably the sons of Zebedee, James and John, their cousins, Andrew and Peter, and Philip and Nathaniel. Now all of these young men are from around Tiberias on the sea of Galilee, but Cana, hardly on the map is a half a days walk. You can just see them as they arrive, finding a back pew, hats in hand. Poor Peter, the big guy, not used to wearing a suit is pulling at his collar and Philip is antsy and James the oldest of the bunch tells them all to straighten up otherwise people will know, if they haven't smelled it already, that they're a bunch of fishermen. Jesus and Mary, being family are meeting and greeting and they all manage to get through the service, which John's gospel doesn't mention at all because all the action takes place at the reception, which again in this tradition, if all goes well and the wine holds out, might go on for days.

Finally, they guys are able to let their hair down and relax a little bit. The ties come off and the jackets are put away and when no one is looking John slips off his shoes. They find a table and stake out their territory and get up for the toasts and enjoy the buffet and even dance. They are really into the swing of things and don't feel so much like wedding crashers and Peter holds his goblet upside down for about the 100th time and says, "le'cheim, more

wine!” (Just maybe, if Jesus doesn’t bring this bunch, the wine would have held out just fine.)

But it doesn’t and the miracle of the wedding at Cana takes place and where there was no wine, where there was only empty casks, there are now six stone jars filled with really extravagantly, abundantly fine water turned to wine.

Not many saw what happened, or knew where the wine came from. Jesus was content to let the groom bask in the glory. He was like that. But John lets us know that these new friends of Jesus knew and for the first time, this great story weaver named John, calls these young men...filled with fine wine, and the presence of the light of the world, Jesus...disciples. And they believed in him and followed him from there on, starting with a trip to Capernaum.

After 3 years, hundreds of miles walked, hundreds of meals shared, hundreds of experiences of wonder later we find them gathered together again, not at a wedding, but with another celebration going on. It is Passover, and the group is now fleshed out to 12 and many others. Unlike the wedding at Cana so long ago, especially as John tells the story, there is a somber mood. Here on this night...water turned into wine....becomes wine turned into blood. And once again that which was empty and depleted is again, in Jesus himself, transformed and renewed and filled as Jesus fills these disciples with

Holy Spirit for what lies ahead. A story to be told. A church to be established.
Lives to be transformed from empty vessels to full.

That's what the church is about and it is indeed our business. We are all about the celebration, about the joy of being in the presence of Jesus, all about the signs and symbols, the font and the meal. At a wedding in Cana his work is begun. And he calls us to join him. To follow him. To be his church. And he gives us to the world. Filled by the spirit he sends us to be his voice, his hands, his feet. To be in and for the world an infinite variety of gifts. To be water changed to extraordinarily fine wine.

Here in this place, we gather every week as guests at the wedding of the ages....we come here to taste and see once again who he is....and to get some idea of who we are.....We come at times so full of life that we can celebrate for days. But sometimes we come....depleted...empty.....drained of the last drop that is our spiritual essence... but if we look, if we seek... ..we will see him... and if we do as Mary says, "whatever he tells us" and if we listen we will hear him....and he is telling us....come on....fill those jars again....take what I have to offer and be filled...

..and the simple waters of our baptism become the rich life giving wine of his blood...and we are changed by him.....filled by him....and like a wedding at cana, saved from the disaster of running out of wine....we, too, are saved....and the party that is our lives..goes on...and goes on...

John gives us a wedding story, but it's far more than that. It is more than meets the eye. Right in the middle of a small town wedding an epiphany took place. Whether he thought he was ready or not, Jesus is shown for what he is. Nothing will ever be the same. The one who can fill us to the brim is let loose on the world. And in him, nothing is impossible.