

SCRIPTURE READINGS AND SERMON

Feast of the Epiphany

January 16, 2022

Psalm 128:1–6 (ESV):

1 Blessed is everyone who fears the LORD,
who walks in his ways!

2 You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands;
you shall be blessed, and it shall be well with you.

3 Your wife will be like a fruitful vine
within your house;
your children will be like olive shoots
around your table.

4 Behold, thus shall the man be blessed
who fears the LORD.

5 The LORD bless you from Zion!
May you see the prosperity of Jerusalem
all the days of your life!

6 May you see your children's children!
Peace be upon Israel!

1st Scripture Reading: Isaiah 43:1–7 (ESV):

Isaiah 62:1–5 (ESV):

Zion's Coming Salvation

62 For Zion's sake I will not keep silent,
and for Jerusalem's sake I will not be quiet,
until her righteousness goes forth as brightness,
and her salvation as a burning torch.

2 The nations shall see your righteousness,

and all the kings your glory,
and you shall be called by a new name
that the mouth of the LORD will give.

3 You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD,
and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.

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.

5 For as a young man marries a young woman,
so shall your sons marry you,
and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride,
so shall your God rejoice over you.

EPISTLE: 1 Corinthians 12:1–11 (ESV):

Spiritual Gifts

12 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed. 2 You know that when you were pagans you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led. 3 Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says “Jesus is accursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except in the Holy Spirit.

4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; 5 and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; 6 and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. 7 To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 8 For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 10 to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. 11 All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

Gospel: John 2:1–11 (ESV):

The Wedding at Cana

2 On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. **2** Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples. **3** When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.” **4** And Jesus said to her, “**Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come.**” **5** His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.”

6 Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. **7** Jesus said to the servants, “**Fill the jars with water.**” And they filled them up to the brim. **8** And he said to them, “**Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast.**” So they took it. **9** When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom **10** and said to him, “Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now.” **11** This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.

Sermon 3 – Second Sunday after Pentecost

“God Gives Good”

John 2:1-11

Dear friends,

Jesus does a small miracle today, but small miracles sometimes have big implications. Jesus in particular seems to like this, He takes small things and small people and He makes them have a significance much greater than you might think. There are a bunch of things we could ask about this whole event, this miracle. Why did Jesus do it? Frankly we'll never know that for certain, other than what John himself comments on. Why does Jesus seem resistant to doing it, then seem to change His mind? That's a good one, and maybe we'll talk about that a little bit. The best question to ask is the best question to ask all the Scriptures. What does this mean? What can we learn from it? Big things come from small places, but we already know that. We know that God likes to work

in unexpected ways. Jesus is doing this to hint at His purpose, to give some idea of what He will do on the cross, but also what the church will do after He is gone. Jesus is the wine. Jesus is always the wine. Jesus is the wine of the Lord's Supper, Jesus is the wine of the feast to come, Jesus is always the wine. I guess that makes Christians winners.

John has barely begun His gospel. Jesus has recruited His first disciples, the team is assembled. John the Baptizer has testified about Jesus, calling Him the Lamb of God who will take away the sins of the world. This doesn't seem like much, but remember John builds His Gospel to convince us, to make us believe, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, so that by believing we may have life in His name. John wants us to see Jesus for who He is, the one who will save us from our sins, the one who will lead us to eternal life, the one who comes down to Earth to save human beings. So that is what John does, beginning to end. John begins with the wedding at Cana, with this sign, this miracle, because He's going to end with what this miracle means. You start as you mean to go on.

Here's how it starts, then. **“On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples. When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, 'They have no wine.' And Jesus said to her, 'Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come.' His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.'”** I have always found this part a little strange. It's funny, because Jesus' mother basically ignores what her son says, and Jesus seems confused as to why she is involving Him at all, but there's a reason for this. Up until this point in his life, Jesus has lived as a very average Jewish laborer. Nothing more, nothing less. Now that He begins to show that He is the Son of God, it is time for the signs, it is time for the miracles. But how to start? What miracle to do first? Raising the dead? Healing the sick? Making the blind see or the lame walk? Nope. Wine.

I cannot believe this is a coincidence. Wine. Wine is the staple drink of the era, but typically you only drank some. Lots of wine, barrels of wine, stone jars of wine, that was for feasts, celebrations. Everyone has wine, but if you have lots and lots of wine, there's a party. Jesus reveals Himself to the disciples, to His mother, to the servants, at a party.

A time of rejoicing. Jesus is about to usher in the time of rejoicing beyond any other. Remember what the angels said about Him. Glory to God in the highest, on Earth peace to men of good will. Now is the time that God has decided to implement His ultimate plan of action to save human beings. Not yesterday. Not ten years ago. Not four hundred. Now. The time of Jubilee, rejoicing has come. That's what Jesus is trying to show by staging His miracle here, at a party, and that's what Jesus is trying to show by making this whole miracle about the most basic element of every party: Wine. A party without lots of wine is no party at all, and as salacious as that sounds, I mean it quite seriously. It would be extremely embarrassing to people back then to throw a party and not have enough wine for everyone. That is a serious faux pas. Jesus wants us today to look back on this and think, this is when the party really started. No earthly party, but the true party, the real celebration, that God has now turned His face to us. He's set on saving us, and He has, He did, and He will. John wants you thinking of the heavenly celebration. Not just the one waiting for you when you die, but the one happening even now, as sinners are saved and the angels rejoice. It starts with Jesus doing His first miracle. It's like the starter pistol for a race. Jesus changes water into wine, and this is supposed say, BANG, its started. I am the Son of God, and I am here to preach, to heal, and to save everyone who repents.

This party doesn't stop either, brothers and sisters. The church is keeping that party going, which is one of the reasons why Jesus chooses wine for this, I think. If being Christian is like getting on God's party bus, which it is, then we are keeping that flame going. We believe that this same Jesus was sent to die for our sins, and that is something we celebrate new every Sunday. That is something you can celebrate every day you rise from your beds and realize the Lord has given you another day. For another day, you are a saved Christian, and that is a wonderful gift. For another day, you can hope for the world to come, the real party, and that too is a wonderful gift. Wine is how we party here in the church. Bread and wine, to be specific. If we are here to celebrate Jesus getting crucified for our sins, Jesus coming to save us, then we have the privilege of not just celebrating that but getting it anew every time we eat and drink the Lord's Supper. It connects us to

that heavenly celebration, that faith has come, forgiveness is here, forgiveness is yours, here it is.

What else? Well, the servants go to draw out the wine, and the master of the feast (you can basically think of that guy as like the head of catering) says this: **“Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now.”** This is exactly what God has done, this is exactly what is going on. This guy actually provides the best description of what God is sending Jesus to do. God gives out the best things last. Jesus was saved until the last days, and then He was sent. Jesus is the good wine that God saved up until the time was just right, and now in these last days He is still serving that Jesus to you. God kept the good wine 'till now, and now that good wine is yours. The best of God's gifts are yours, right now, new every day, until they are yours eternally in the life of the world to come. The Lord's Supper isn't just a reminder of this, it is Him giving you Jesus every time you take it.

Jesus told Mary, my hour has not yet come. It's not time to bring out the good stuff, Jesus was saying to her, that is coming. God knows when to bring out the good stuff. Mary thought now was the time. Jesus told her, not yet. The good wine is still coming. The good gifts of God, the best gifts of God, come when God wills and not before. That's maddening, but it is so important to humble ourselves and remember that. For us, the good stuff has already come. We're looking back on it, remembering when it came on the cross with those words, it is finished! We remember when it came at the tomb, He is not here, He is risen. But you don't have to only remember. You can believe. You can believe that God's good gifts come for you today, tomorrow, and every day. You wake, and you are a Christian, saved, loved, part of God's party. You go to sleep, and you are saved, loved, and part of God's party. The good stuff isn't coming for you folks. The good stuff, the wine, the Christ Himself, has already come for you.

Amen.