

Gifts Galore
A Sermon by Rev. Frances Savill
Sunday January 16, 2022

John 2:1-11, 1 Cor 12:1-11

Our passage ends with the words;

"Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him."

Jesus was at wedding celebration with Mary and his disciples. And the unthinkable happened, the wine ran out. This would have been a terrible embarrassment for the Bride and Groom, and a terrible way to begin a marriage.

Wine is a symbol of joy, and so to run out of joy before the wedding celebrations were even over is not a good sign. Mary, the mother of Jesus, told Jesus the situation. Jesus responded what is that to me, or in other words, it's not my problem. And it wasn't.

Then Jesus said something else, very interesting, "his hour had not yet come." "Jesus' hour", in the rest of John's gospel refers to Jesus' passion, death and resurrection.

So this odd statement hangs in the air and it is clear that Jesus certainly wasn't under any compulsion to do anything.

It was not his hour, and it wasn't his concern, and yet Jesus acted; freely, and graciously. It also seems that Mary expected Jesus to act because she told the servants to do whatever Jesus instructed them to do.

Jesus seized the opportunity to speak into the lives of the bride and groom, to reveal his glory, and to teach us something about God's kingdom.

Jesus told the servants to fill up the stone water jugs.

Each would hold 20 to 30 gallons of water and then he instructed the servants to draw out the water and present it to the MC of the celebrations. Suddenly wine is given in abundance – gallons and gallons of wine, the best wine.

If Jesus just wanted to show his power he could have produced a couple of cups of wine or maybe a few bottles. If he just wanted to help out the bride and groom, get them out of the awkward situation, surely one water container 30 extra gallons of wine would have been sufficient for the remaining celebrations.

But 180 gallons of wine has to show something more.

For the bride and groom it showed that in Jesus' presence the deepest joy, the greatest joy never runs out.

But back to Jesus' cryptic comment about his hour, about his death, in Christian imagery martyrdom and death is often linked in images to marriage.

Death consummates the marriage as a martyr is joined to his Lord. The church will be adorned as a bride for her husband in the marriage of the lamb who was slain. Two women who are going to be burned at the stake for their faith, are described as brides being prepared for the bridegroom.

If Jesus is referring to his death, as part of the understanding of this great gift, then we see again, afresh, anew, the wondrous abundance of resurrection and salvation, and life given in Jesus' name.

Jesus presence changes everything.

Wine – joy – resurrection life flowed where the wine had run out, where there was death. And this wine was the best of all.

If you had been at the wedding that day with the disciples what would you have remembered- I doubt that I would be thinking about the lovely bride, or the food that was served.

The overwhelming image of the day would have been how Jesus' presence changes everything!

I came across a story I would like to share with you:

"Imagine you are at your church's business meeting. The news isn't good. The church treasurer reports offerings for the month were lower than anticipated. If she pays the mortgage, she will be unable to settle the bill for the new hot water tank and electrical work accrued last month. If the trend continues, paying wages will be difficult. People begin a lively debate about the church's financial priorities. The building and grounds committee chairperson informs those present that the primary air conditioning units may not last the summer. The roof over the sanctuary leaks and needs repairs. An animated conversation commences questioning everything from why the church did not carry an extended warranty to whether a local roofing company would give the church a deal on shingles. The men's ministry leader says only three men attended the monthly Saturday breakfast. He is considering putting the event on hold until more interest develops. Suddenly, the room explodes with noise. The door to the auditorium burst open and light floods the room. To everyone's amazement, Jesus Christ majestically enters. His hair is brilliant white. His face shines so brightly it is blinding. His eyes blaze like fire. Everyone instantly falls to the ground, in awe at the sight. Christ serenely makes his way to the front of the auditorium and sits down. In an authoritative voice He says, "Continue."

*Would the business meeting's tone suddenly change? Would there be any more arguing? Would people leave that gathering feeling positive or negative? There are no pessimists in the resurrected Christ's presence! How could there be? He is the King of kings. Nothing is impossible for Him. If this scenario were to actually happen, that business meeting would be the most exciting, encouraging, upbeat gathering in that church's history. Why? Because the risen Christ would be present, and His presence changes everything."
(Flickering Lamps p.42)*

Jesus' presence at the wedding changes everything.
Jesus' presence in our church changes everything.

Consider the passage from 1 Corinthians. If you were God and you were going to give gifts to your church, to your people, to serve you, to build up the church, how many gifts would you give?

I'd say something like, "how many gifts does the church need?" We need a few teachers, a couple of good administrators, a smattering of other gifts here and there. It would seem to me that the church would need a couple of each of the gifts for the community.

But God doesn't do things my way. God gives gifts to everyone. Every person is changed when they encounter our living Lord. Every believer is given a gift from Holy Spirit of God.

No one is left out. Everyone is given something to share, to add to the church, to change and bless the church. All of us are equipped to act as Jesus' ambassadors and carry out his mission in the world that Jesus loves.

Jesus changes everything. He transforms a wedding celebration. Suddenly there is 180 gallons of wine, the best wine, after ours ran out.

Christ's presence changes every one of us. Every believer given a gift so everyone of us has something of value to contribute for the good of all, no one left out, no one without value, everyone gifted by God to be a blessing to others, serving Christ's mission.

Christ's presence changes everything We stand at the graveside and say that this is not the end, but a new beginning.

Thanks be to God.

Lord Jesus you are here with us and your living presence changes everything. It changes us, it changes every situation in our lives and in our church. Open our eyes to your presence here today. Guide us to know what our gifts are and how you would ask us to use them. Reveal your glory to us that we would be made new. Amen.