

**2nd Sunday after Epiphany
Jan. 16 2022
Rev. Betsy Welliver Sentigar
Christ Church Towanda Pa. 18848**

The Wedding at Cana John 2: 1-11

In the chill of winter, let us gather our hearts and take a couple of minutes to listen to a poem. This is an invitation to notice our breath, the life giving force gifted to us by God. I will recite this poem of invitation and we will sit in silence for two minutes before I begin my sermon. - Catch your breath!

Conspire- Richard Rohr (OFM)

Breathe with Us if you are healing,
In a world of fault lines and fractures
We stand in a place where opposites come together,
Awaiting the birth of what is to come.
If you are doubting, welcome. If you are healing, welcome.
If you are angry at injustice, welcome.
We await a new genesis, one more beginning in a series of starts,
Trailing backwards in time to the very first day.
If you are afraid, welcome.
If you are joyful, welcome.
God's generous rhythm of life, death, resurrection,
Moving in and through all things,
The very breath and source of the cosmos itself
Our pathways converge and continue,
Each one of us a catalyst for loving action.
We a community of saints, conspire
Breathe with us. -

Who doesn't love a wedding. Here we are today in a wonderful celebration - a joyous occasion of a wedding where Jesus and his mother are both attending. As I return to this scripture in the lectionary cycle, I am always perplexed at the question Jesus directs to Mary..."Woman, what concern of that is to you and me" as she is remarking on the scarcity of wine available for the guests.

in situations of hosting especially in ancient times, it is usually the women who are paying attention to provisions. Here Mary is remarking on available provisions for the guests. I could never tell if Jesus' tone is dismissive or truly curious. I struggle with this every time I visit this passage. On further digging and contemplation, what I came to realize is that his exchange with Mary is not disrespectful but was a Semitic expression of a disassociation of common interests.

By this I mean to explain...Jesus and Mary have a common goal for differing reasons. For Mary, it is a matter of provision at the feast. For Jesus, this will become the first of many miracles. In this miracle, he

responds to Mary's mission of fulfilling human scarcity while God's purposes of provision are demonstrated, God's manifestation in the world will shine through the acts that Jesus performs.

In chapter 2 the sign of water into wine points to God revealing God in God's self in this miraculous event which Jesus performs. . Here is the glory...God is revealing God's whole self - God becoming flesh...the fullness of God in humanity. Further along in John, 1:50 Jesus will exclaim ..."You will see greater things than that!"

The take away is that putting aside fear of scarcity, we can rely on God's benevolent abundance. For us in our day, perhaps moment to moment, this trust in God's provision is a decision of faith with intention. It is easy to become hijacked into a fearful position. Social media thrives and profits by our reactive patterns of fear. Just think back to 2020 and our desperation to have enough toilet paper. Scarcity thinking for sure!

As God has bestowed gifts on his son Jesus, how do we experience giftedness as Christians on the journey. . Both the Psalm and Corinthians reinforce the theme of our Gospel reading today which is God's benevolence to humanity.

In this Psalm today, we come to learn about God's extravagant abundance...like the mighty mountains . In all its preciousness we can take refuge in the shadow of His wings. God among us, the message of Epiphany speaks of the truth that we can be confident in on our journey of faith.

David's voice is the one we hear in this Psalm relaying to all of us that God is indeed kind and generous. Trusting in this message with faith will keep our focus God directed. Again, the opposite of faith is doubt and fear. Abandoning to God in trust, bringing ourselves before him assures every one of us of abundant. provision. This resonates with the wine provision, the miracle that Jesus performed.

Segue to Paul's letter to the Corinthians. It was written in response to a community under duress and torn apart by the dissension over the nature, use and apportionment of such gifts. He emphasized that the gifts are a grace to everyone. , not the personal and private possession of certain people. It is the triune operation of God of spiritual gifting; the Holy Spirit as the giver (12:4), Jesus the one to whom service is given (12:5); and God

the Father as the One at work in the gift (12:6). These gifts are complimentary with no single one more valuable than another.

As I sit with each one of you, I encounter a repeated theme which is that we are a warm and welcoming church. May we bear this in mind as we meet the stranger. May we bear this in mind as we meet our neighbor. May we bear this in mind as we greet our family here in this place...or anyone coming through the doors of this place. The tradition we hold dear calls upon us to celebrate our gifts, to call them out from each other according to the context of our strength, talent and ability.

In celebration at communion the words spoken I have taken liberty to expand on the following prayer...

The gifts of God

For the people of God

Take them (and offer them)

In remembrance that Christ died for you.

Feed on on him (and use your gifts)

Through your hearts of faith with joy and thanksgiving.

Amen