

Sermon for Sunday January 16, 2021
Second Sunday after the Epiphany
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Trinity on the Hill Episcopal Church
Los Alamos, New Mexico

Isaiah 62:1-5
Psalm 36:5-10
1 Corinthians 12:1-11
John 2:1-11

IT'S MORE THAN JUST TURNING WATER INTO WINE

Today's Gospel reveals the third of the manifestations that make up the celebration of the Manifestation of God into our world.

We only get this one in year C. As you all know, the Sunday Lectionary cycle is divided into 3. Year A is the Gospel according to Matthew, Year B is the Gospel according to Mark, and Year C is the Gospel according to Luke. The Gospel of John is spread through the three-year cycle.

The Epiphany, the manifestation of the Divine, witness the joining of Heaven to Earth and Earth to Heaven in the bodily incarnation of God in the body of the baby Jesus.

- The first manifestation is in the Divine Star and the Wise Men, the Magi, who are led to Bethlehem and the acknowledgment of Jesus as a King – a birth heralded in the skies.
- The second manifestation comes at the Baptism of Jesus when the Heavens open, the Holy Spirit descends as a Dove and rests on Jesus, and the voice of God the Father resounds: “This is my son, the beloved, in whom I am well pleased.”
- The third manifestation of the Epiphany comes at Cana when Jesus turns water into wine.

This was more than just some magic trick like pulling a rabbit out of a hat or turning a silk kerchief into a dove. This was a sign, and signs are what we all seek.

It's what the Magi sought as they followed the star, what the pilgrims sought from John at the Jordan, and what Mary asked of her son at the wedding feast.

In the sign at Cana we find a foreshadowing of events to come and a metaphor for the Love of God for humanity.

In this story, the Gospel of John ties the beginning of Jesus' ministry with the end of the journey, and the road from Cana leads to Calvary, and the water of Cana becomes the Crucifixion of Calvary, and the wine of the feast becomes the glory we savor in the resurrection.

Consider Jesus' response to his mother's statement "They have no wine." Like a petulant boy, he says. "Woman, what concern is that to you and to me?"

[Really, refer to your mother as "Woman."]

And he goes on: "My hour has not yet come."

"My hour." To what is Jesus referring here. If you saw the episode of The Chosen, the statement seems to be interpreted as the time in which Jesus reveals himself as the Messiah through signs. But I believe this is something even more profound.

I believe "My hour" refers to the end of his journey, to the Upper Room where he will institute the Eucharist and equates the bread to his body and the wine to his blood. It will be at that evening meal that Jesus will share his request to be remembered in the bread and the wine as a testament to God the Father and the gift of the Son for the sin of the world.

Of course Mary ignores the petulance of her son and tells the servants to "Do whatever he tells you." And the servants are told, "Fill the jars with water."

Now this is late in the feast, and the six jars hold between 20 to 30 gallons each. That's between 120 and 180 gallons.

This is not like opening another case of wine to satisfy the needs of guests. This is more than the town itself could consume.

Think about the number of gallon jugs that would be. Take the gallon of milk out of your refrigerator and imagine 180 of them in your kitchen. That's a lot of wine.

So the water turns to wine and the servants fetch the steward of the feast, who is amazed. He goes over to the bridegroom and remarks. Everyone serves the good wine first and after they're too drunk to know the difference bring out the three-buck Chuck, but you have have saved the best wine for last.

I think this new equivalency of the best coming last tells us about the precession of the earlier Holy People who proclaimed the Kingdom of God before the time of Christ.

The first wine comes in the lives of the Judges, the Prophets, the Kings and the Holy men and women who toiled to do the work of God in the World.

And now in the end of the Divine Manifestations we are served the best wine of all in the life of Jesus the Christ. That is the quality of the wine we savor as salvation in the weekly Eucharist.

You see, I believe the sheer quantity of the wine is a metaphor for the abundance of God's Grace in the world.

We live in fear of scarcity just as the people of Israel lived in Jesus' day.

Imagine us, here we are, the richest country in the world, and we live in fear of scarcity. That was evident at the start of the Pandemic when we all seemed to panic and emptied the shelves of groceries, and most of all, bought up all the toilet paper.

That may be understandable, but to fear a scarcity of the Grace of God. That's a different matter. It would be as if we believe that Heaven has limited seating and only the 144,000 will get in.

The story of Cana, the story of the absolute abundance of the best of all possible wines, presents a bold refusal to submit to the fear of scarcity, and instead preaches a lesson of divine benevolence.

It is the same metaphor that we will see in the feeding of the 5,000 where five loaves and three fish feed so many and yet there are leftovers.

The story of Cana is a metaphor for the unheard of abundance of God's grace.

Here we have Jesus – after the wine is finished – giving the wedding party wine of the most exquisite quality.

Even when we are full and our tastes dulled, God gives us more than we can even realize – or even appreciate.

We are given grace beyond measure every time we gather for the Eucharist.

That's why the altar, the table is open to all because there is more than enough Grace to go around. We are called to that abundance.

There is a Celtic welcome I've used as a beckoning to the Eucharist. It goes like this:

This is the table, not of the Church, but of the Lord.

It is made ready for those who love him
and for those who want to love him more.

So, come, you who have much faith
and you who have little,
you who have been here often,
and you who have not been here long,
you who have tried to follow,
and you who have failed.

Come, because it is the Lord who invites you.

It is his will that those who want him
should meet him here.

That is the welcome manifestation of the Divine today – to share the Grace of God with everyone we meet in the Joy of Jesus Christ.

Amen.