

“Reflecting on Change Agents and Chores”
Sermon for First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of
Decatur, Georgia
Season of Epiphany, Sunday, January 17, 2016
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Texts: John 2: 1-12 1 Corinthians 12: 1-11

The Wedding at Cana

John 2

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. ²Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. ³When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.” ⁴And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.” ⁵His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.” ⁶Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. ⁷Jesus said to them, “Fill the jars with water.” And they filled them up to the brim. ⁸He said to them, “Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.” So they took it. ⁹When 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 ¹⁰and 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.” ¹¹Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

¹²After this he went down to Capernaum with his mother, his brothers, and his disciples; and they remained there a few days.

Spiritual Gifts

1 Corinthians 12

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. ²You know that when you were pagans, you were enticed and led astray to idols that could not speak. ³Therefore 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.

⁴Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; ⁶and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. ⁷To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. ⁸To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, ⁹to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, ¹⁰to 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. ¹¹All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.

“Mother Mary comes to me speaking words of wisdom.

Let it be. Let it be.” (Lennon and McCartney)

Mother Mary appears exactly twice in the Gospel of John. Mary’s appearances bookend, if you will,
the telling of the earthly ministry of Jesus.
We first meet Mary, the mother of Jesus,
in the second chapter of John at a wedding in Cana.

She spurs her hesitant son to begin his miraculous work of healing and hope.
We'll get back to that in a moment.

We do not encounter Mary again in John's Gospel until Jesus is on the cross.

John 19 reads:

*"Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother,
and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.*

When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her,

he said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son."

Then he said to the disciple, "Here is your mother."

And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home."

As we behold the Christ we are beheld.

As we behold one another we are afforded the opportunity to be held,

to embrace and cherish one another as children of God.

In the beginning of Jesus' ministry, Mary is a catalyst;
and at the end of his life on earth

she accepts his charge to love and grow forward.

God's mission of grace

renews lives, grows disciples, and transforms the human condition.

God looks to us from the cross and the skies and calls out,

"Here is your neighbor."

We are to take each other into the shelter of our hearts.

Now let's go back to the wedding, to the beginning,
to Christ's launching pad of ministry.

*On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee,
and the mother of Jesus was there.*

*²Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the
wedding.*

*³When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him,
"They have no wine."*

*⁴And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what concern is that to
you and to me?
My hour has not yet come."*

*⁵His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells
you."*

Imagine that prior to this conversation there had been many
more.

Mary and her son had talked and talked.

You know she fussed when he stayed behind in Jerusalem at
age 12.

Surely they had heart-to-heart talks at the kitchen table,
while walking back and forth to the well for water,
while contemplating the stars and the cosmos.

Over the years they fostered and developed a solid trust and
mutual respect.

He knew he could trust her judgment and count on her
support.

She knew Jesus gifts, and she understood they were
supernatural.

She also knew he was hesitant,
hesitant to use his gifts for his own good,
hesitant to make a splash and draw attention to
himself,
and hesitant to get started on the road
less travelled.

So in Cana of Galilee when the wine ran out and the party started to die,

Mary said simply, *“They have no wine.”*

Jesus said, *“My hour has not yet come.”*

In other words, *“I’m not ready. I am waiting for a sign.*

How about if I let you know when it’s time for me to get started on being a Messiah.”

Mary must have been thinking, *“My God, Jesus is 30 years old.*

I will not be held responsible for a failure to launch!”

Instead she turned to the servants and said, *“Do whatever he tells you to do.”*

“Do whatever he tells you to do.”

The time had come to begin, and with that simple sentence of instruction

Mother Marys words of wisdom spurred Jesus into action,

and the world and you and I have never been the same.

Mary had faith that the Son of God would use his gifts for the common good.

She saw that miracles and ministry are a team sport grounded in trust.

In order for people to have food and drink, relationships and meaning

and the basic necessities of life

we are simply, positively going to have to work together.

“Do whatever he tells you to do.”

Jesus then gave the servants instructions.

They did as he commanded and all credit went to the

bridegroom and the steward.

That's fine.

We are not here for the credit; we are here to make a difference;

we are here to build up the kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven.

Who cares who gets the credit

as long as our brothers in sisters in Haiti
get water and food and relief?

Who cares who gets star billing

as long as effective health care policies
are put into effect?

Who cares who gets their name in lights

as long as we resolve the morass in the Middle East
and bring our soldiers home?

“Do whatever he tells you to do.”

Listen for the instructions.

Thank God we do not have failures to launch in this congregation!

We are too talented and beautiful to sit on our haunches and be entertained.

You already have gifts and talents and the Spirit.

The difference between a talent and a spiritual gift is how it is used.

How are you using your gifts?

Are you striving to leave the world a better place than the way you found it?

Are you using your gifts to serve God in this urban mission field called Atlanta?

in the market place? on Wall Street and Main Street?

As Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., said,

“Everybody can be great because anybody can serve.

*You don't have to have a college degree to serve.
You don't have to make your subject and your verb agree to serve.
You don't have to know about Plato and Aristotle to serve.
You don't have to know Einstein's theory of relativity to serve.
You don't have to know
the second theory of thermodynamics to serve.
You only need a heart full of grace, a soul generated by love."*

You know, a good place to start serving God
is by doing everyday common chores.

Recently we hosted a Fellowship Dinner following worship.
After sampling a little from every dish

(in order to be able to compliment every cook)

I went into the kitchen, rolled up my shirt
sleeves,

and started to wash the pots and pans
and serving dishes.

Someone walked into the kitchen to get a to-go box,
witnessed yours truly arm deep in soap suds, and said
– and I quote --,

*"Pastor James! You should not be doing the
dishes!"*

You know, God doesn't ask us to seek greatness,
to do things we think are great,
to speak as if only greatness is emitted from
our mouths.

God asks only that we be available,
available for whatever chore or responsibility is laid
before us,

that our availability is due to unconditional

love,

to having hearts generated by love.

“Do whatever he tells you to do.”

Jesus of Nazareth first used his supernatural gifts of God
amongst everyday folks in a common setting, a
wedding celebration in Cana.

We can receive this as a blessed reminder
that our spiritual gifts are not something to be
hoarded
or covered up or saved for a special day,
but rather a gift to be shared and utilized
in the everyday occurrences of
life.

Wherever you are God can do mighty things for the glory of
God through you!

Go for a walk in the woods along a mountain trail
and you may encounter a sign by the movement called
Leave No Trace,

a center for outdoor ethics:

Their signs read:

“Take only pictures, leave only footprints.”

As you go through this dance called life,
what are you carrying away with you,
and what footprints, what impact, what legacy
will you leave behind?

“Do whatever he tells you to do.”

...and then, and then,

“Let it be. Let it be.”

*...and you will be filled with the power
of the Creator, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
Amen!*