

JANUARY 16, 2022
Second Sunday after epiphany



**What Happened
at the Wedding in Cana**

St. John United Church of Christ
10207 Lincoln Trail, Fairview Heights, IL
397-6323
Rev. Rosemary Captain

ANNOUNCEMENT:

in order to keep all of us safe, the church council has voted to postpone in person worship services in the

sanctuary for 4 weeks. Hopefully we can re-open for service February 13.

OUR CONGREGATIONAL MEETING WILL BE VIA ZOOM ON JANUARY 23 AT 11 AM.

Look for instructions in next week's bulletin.

***CALL TO WORSHIP:**

With steadfast love, God calls our names.

Come to find refuge in the shelter of God's ways.

We long to be recognized and affirmed.

We are eager for a place of shelter and security.

Feast on the abundance of God's house.

Come to drink deeply from the fountain of life.

We are ready to hear the Word of God.

We want to be guided by eternal truth.

Reach out to claim the gifts God pours out on us.

The Spirit is eager to inspire and empower each one.

When God calls us, we cannot remain silent.

When Christ is real to us, we accept our discipleship.

***UNISON PRAYER OF INVOCATION:**

How awesome it is that you care for us, God of all life! Your delight in us brings out our best. When you rejoice in us, we come to believe in our capacity for goodness. When your light and salvation dawn in our lives, we want to share the joy. Remind us now of the gifts you so freely bestow. Help us to

**recognize them in ourselves and in one another,
that we may use them to serve people in need and
give glory to your name. Amen.**

***GLORIA PATRI: NCH 759**

**Glory to the Creator, the Christ, the Holy Spirit,
Three- in-One; as it was in the beginning, is now,
and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Amen.**

READING FROM ISAIAH 62:1-5

For Zion's sake I won't keep silent,
and for Jerusalem's sake I won't sit still
until her righteousness shines out like a light,
and her salvation blazes like a torch.

² Nations will see your righteousness,
all kings your glory.

You will be called by a new name,
which the LORD's own mouth will determine.

³ You will be a splendid garland in the LORD's hand,
a royal turban in the palm of God's hand.

⁴ You will no longer be called Abandoned,
and your land will no longer be called Deserted.
Instead, you will be called My Delight Is in Her,
and your land, Married.

Because the LORD delights in you,
your land will be cared for once again.

⁵ As a young man marries a young woman,

so your sons will marry you.

With the joy of a bridegroom because of his bride,
so your God will rejoice because of you.

***GOSPEL LESSON: John 2:1-11**

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, and ² Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the celebration. ³ When the wine ran out, Jesus' mother said to him, "They don't have any wine."

⁴ Jesus replied, "Woman, what does that have to do with me? My time hasn't come yet."

⁵ His mother told the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." ⁶ Nearby were six stone water jars used for the Jewish cleansing ritual, each able to hold about twenty or thirty gallons.

⁷ Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water," and they filled them to the brim. ⁸ Then he told them, "Now draw some from them and take it to the headwaiter," and they did. ⁹ The headwaiter tasted the water that had become wine. He didn't know where it came from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew.

The headwaiter called the groom ¹⁰ and said, "Everyone serves the good wine first. They bring out the second-rate wine only when the guests are drinking freely. You kept the good wine until

now.”¹¹ This was the first miraculous sign that Jesus did in Cana of Galilee. He revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him.

Hear the ancient words revealed to us anew.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

MESSAGE: “Manifestation And Transformation”

In the two readings we had today and two others we did not read, namely Psalm 36:5-10, and 1 Corinthians 12:1-11 which calls attention to the manifestation of God through the gifts of the Spirit, the dominant theme is the dramatic manifestation of the power of God. The Gospel lesson calls attention to the beginning of the ministry of Jesus. The account of the miracle at the wedding in Cana in John 2:1-11 is, according to the Fourth Gospel the first of Jesus’ signs, when he “revealed his glory” as read in verse 11.

In Isaiah 62:1-5 the brightness of a vindicated Jerusalem reveals God’s grace. Psalm 36:5-10 is a hymn of praise for God’s steadfast love, faithfulness, righteousness, and judgment, the one in whose light “we see light.” (verse 9)

So, our job is to figure out what God is revealing to us in these 4 scripture texts. This time, let’s concentrate on the words of the Prophet Isaiah.

First of all, its always good to know the author of what we are reading, the time in history, and the context. (*What was going on in the author’s community.*)

Here’s some information that will come in handy the next time you are on Jeopardy. The book of Isaiah is actually a composite work, the product of several different prophets who ministered at different periods in the history of Israel.

Chapters 1-39 is referred to as First Isaiah and attributed in general to the eighth-century BCE Judean prophet who name the book bears. Chapters 40-55 is referred to as Second Isaiah or Deutero-Isaiah, and attributed to an unknown prophet who lived in Babylon during the Babylonian exile of the sixth century. Chapters 56-66 is referred to as Third Isiah, or Trito-Isaiah, and attributed to a prophet or prophets how lived in Judah after the return form Babylonia exile in 539 BCE. Thus, our reading for today if from Third Isaiah.

The prophet is speaking to the Israelites who returned from their exile only to find Jerusalem in ruins. The temple and their homes had been destroyed; their friends were scattered. It was difficult for them to see “home”. It was time for a word from God through the voice of the Prophet to

restore the city of Jerusalem and the people in general. Those words came from Third Isaiah 62:1-5.

Life for the returnees in Judah remained very harsh. In these difficult circumstances there are both economic oppression and, in an attempt to cope with life's problems, a resurgence in the pagan rituals long indigenous in Israel. *(This reminds me of today when people are in a bad situation some turn away from God and toward drugs, or alcohol, or robbery.)*

In response to this situation, Third Isaiah announces God's imminent judgment on the oppressors and syncretists. *(Syncretists are those who want to fuse different systems of belief in religion. That word might come up in Jeopardy round, too.)* The prophet promises the righteous that God's glorious deliverance of Israel. Soon the wealth of the nations will pour into Jerusalem along with the rest of Israel's exiles, and the shame and sorrow of the recent past will be replaced with eternal joy and prosperity. The prophet sees an inner transformation of the people.

The prophet promises a new name from the mouth of God (verse 2), gives new names as reversals of past conditions (verse 4), and gives a metaphorical explanation of the meaning of the names (verse 5). The new names thus announce and confirm a new

election of the people. It makes a difference what one is called, especially if the name is given by God. *(I invite you to reread the passage from Isaiah and see if this explanation fits.)*

We could call all this an Epiphany and a manifestation of God among us. And that is exactly what happens at the wedding at Cana. John 2:11 tells us that Jesus "revealed his glory." It was a revelation event.

So, what is the author of the Gospel of John trying to say to us about Jesus in the Cana wedding story. First of all, John wants it understood that Jesus performed his signs according to God's will and not in response to any person's wish or need. In John's Gospel, Jesus speaks and acts not in response to any claims of kinship, friendship, or even need, but at his own initiative as God's will is revealed to him.

This pattern may seem to be without compassion, but something more than compassion is involved. Jesus meets the need, but he does more. Compassion alone might provide wine, but sovereign grace does more: it reveals God in what is done and confirms the disciples' faith in Jesus.

The second thing that John's Gospel is saying that a sign is not a miracle to amaze or an offer of proof for his teaching. The sign was a window through which God was revealed. To attend to the miraculous and

to miss the revelation would be no more than curiosity wallowing in the unusual.

(I've given you much to think about. God's revelations appeared in the ancient days and still today. We are thankful for these words that help us and restore our faith formation.) Amen.

PASTORAL PRAYER: Beginning with a time for silent personal prayer.

God of the past. God of the present. And God for eternity. We strive to learn more and more about you through our Bible studies. We search for your meaning through the prophets and apostles. Open our hearts and minds as we search for your will for our lives.

Hear, O God, our humble intercessions on behalf of all humanity in the name of Christ our Lord. Send forth your Spirit of truth upon your church throughout the world that all who confess your name may agree in the truth of your Word in writing, and especially in the Word made flesh. May we live purely, honestly, and in godly love that Christ may be glorified.

Hear us, O God, for all the afflicted and especially for any of our acquaintances who are sick, and all those on our prayer list. Sustain their spirits in faith and hope, and in due time make them whole again.

We pray all these things in the name of the Word made flesh, as we pray together.

THE LORD'S PRAYER:

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be your name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

INVITATION TO SHARE: What will we give in gratitude for God's forgiveness and healing grace? Who can repay the many gifts we have received with the miracle of life? Let us rejoice in the mission God entrusts to us.

***PRAYER OF DEDICATION:** God of our baptism, whose Holy Spirit fires our imagination and fills our lives with purpose, we rejoice to commit ourselves anew with our gifts. May what we share strengthen your children spiritually, inspiring each person to invest fully in the work you set before us. The varieties of gifts you entrust to us can be realized only if they are used. Thank you for granting us this joy. Amen.

***RESPONSIVE COMMISSION AND BLESSING:**

Depart to serve, strengthened by the Holy Spirit.

Use the wisdom, faith, and knowledge you received.

We cannot rest in God's care or keep silent.

The love of God must be lived and shared.

Go forth with praise on your lips.

The steadfast love of God will light your paths.

We want to offer light and hope to others.

Daily, we will seek inspiration for this joyous task.

Reach out as listening, caring, healing people.

Your love will become a miracle for someone in need.

We pray that God will keep us open to further learning. May our humble witness attract others to Christ. Amen.

PRAYER LIST: Urban Baum, Donna Isselhard, Joe Knapp, Agnes Doctolero, David Seneczyn, Cathy Ganschinietz, Warren Neff, Jack Harris, Lynn Hursey, Robert Uhrig, Carol White, Dan Regan, Dennis Franklin, John Biehl.