

**“Be a Blessing To Others”**

Psalm 36:5-10, John 2:1-11

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A Church goer wrote a letter to the editor of a newspaper and complained that it made no sense to go to church every Sunday. "I've gone for 30 years now," he wrote, "and in that time I have heard something like 3,000 sermons. But for the life of me, I can't remember a single one of them. So, I think I'm wasting my time and the pastors are wasting theirs by giving sermons at all." This started a real controversy in the "Letters to the Editor" column, much to the delight of the editor. It went on for weeks until someone wrote this clincher: "I've been married for 30 years now. In that time my wife has cooked some 32,000 meals. But, for the life of me, I cannot recall the entire menu for a single one of those meals. But I do know this. They all nourished me and gave me the strength I needed to do my work. If my wife had not given me these meals, I would be physically dead today. Likewise, if I had not gone to church for nourishment, I would be spiritually dead today!" When you are DOWN to nothing.....God is UP to something! Faith sees the invisible, believes the incredible and receives the impossible! Thank God for our physical AND our spiritual nourishment!

Probably, the minister's job is to provide God's spiritual food at every Sunday service and help the congregation to grow in faith. Speaking of spiritual nourishment there is 'a must-have spiritual ingredient' for God's recipes. It is 'Grace.' The purpose of Jesus' ministry was to teach God's love and to spread God's abundant grace for us. With the lens of God's grace, let's look at our New Testament reading. This is a story about a wedding feast at Cana. In Jesus' time, Jewish weddings were festive events and grand parties that lasted for seven days. It usually began on Tuesday nights and the groom and his friends would go over to the bride's house at night. On the way over, the groomsmen would be swinging their olive-oil lamps, having a fun time. The men would gather in front of the bride's home, and she would come out to the front steps. Now, for the first time in her adult life, she would take off her veil and showed off how beautiful she really was. This removal of the veil was a special event. Then, the groom and the groomsmen would again walk down the streets with their olive-oil lamps swinging and they would go over to the groom's house to begin a seven-day party. During those seven days, family and friends would bring their gifts, their hot dishes, and their good humor. At such wedding celebrations as these, wine was served. Wine was and is part of Jewish families' daily life, especially for the wedding banquet.

What happened to our wedding banquet? In the story, when Jesus' mother and his disciples were invited to the wedding celebration, they realized that "they have no wine." "No wine" means "not enough" to continue the celebration. The party could stop and come to an end. People were in a panic. They didn't want to end the special party, but they had no idea what to do. Jesus asked people to bring six stoneware water pots and fill them with water. When the servants filled water to the brim and took them to the host, they were surprised to see that water had become wine. The Bible tells us that this act in Cana of Galilee was the **first sign** Jesus gave. In John's Gospel, he never mentioned any acts as miracles. In other words, we are not supposed to see a miracle itself, but we focus on the meaning of Jesus' sign as miraculous.

"What is the message implied in this act of changing water into wine?" The message is not so much the water into wine. Jesus took six stone water jars which can hold twenty or thirty gallons of water and he transformed them. How much wine did Jesus produce to continue the party, especially for the bride and groom's family? It was approximately 120-180 gallons of wine, and people tasted "the best wine". We can easily imagine how people reacted to more wines, even the better ones. The point of this sign is "abundance." Jesus brought "abundance" and "joy" when people were in need and in despair. Jesus transformed their need and despair into abundance and joy.

As you may know, I am personally not a fan of wine nor any alcoholic drinks. One day, my wife and I made a day trip to Sonoma County. We knew that Napa Valley is well known for its wines. So we were simply curious what the wineries look like. While driving, we found a winery, which was "Chateau Montelena Winery" and we drove in there. It was around 5:00 p.m. but people were still tasting wines in the hall. I encouraged my wife to go and taste some if she was interested. She did taste a couple wines and told me that they were good. The winery also owned a lake which we walked around. While we were walking along the path, she told me that she saw a sign-in paper on the table with \$20.00 requirement, but she didn't pay anything. She wondered whether she was supposed to pay money for the wine tasting or not. With confidence, I told her that they wouldn't charge anything just for wine tasting, because I assumed that even though it was wine tasting, she didn't drink a full glass of wine. But she worried too much about it. I told her that I would go and ask them about the cost. One of the staff, who served at the wine tasting hour, told me that he wondered why she took off without making a payment. He said that it was \$20.00 for wine tasting. We realized that it was not free, but an expensive one. No free wine tasting there!

But Jesus Christ offered the best wine without any charge. This miracle was

given to people freely. This is grace! God's grace is always open, free and more than enough to serve everyone. Jesus simply asks us to bring our own jars of our lives before him. When we follow him and lay these down, he will trade our sorrow, shame, pain and sickness for joy. Our Old Testament reading describes our God in this way. How precious is your steadfast love, O God. All people may take refuge in the shadow of your wings. **Let them feast on the abundance of your house and drink from the river of your delights.** For with you is the fountain of life; in your life we see light.

Over a hundred gallons of wine is more than enough to enjoy the party for seven days and more. The wedding banquet is a symbol of our individual life. We hope that our life is always an exciting and fun time, but we know that we may encounter the unexpected challenges, barriers or difficulties in our journey. Our story in the Gospel of John invites us to welcome Jesus Christ and rely on him. Jesus is the source of God's grace. We are called to share God's abundance with those who are thirsty, hungry and seeking God and invite them to join us. Jesus expresses God's wish and purpose for our life journey. We are also called to be a channel of blessings to others as Jesus shared his blessings with guests at the wedding banquet. Let us be a blessing to others. Amen.