



# *Lakeside Sermons*

Lakeside Baptist Church • Rocky Mount, North Carolina  
Jody C. Wright, Senior Minister

JANUARY 20, 2012  
THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

Our Hour Has Come  
I Corinthians 12:1-11; John 2:1-11

I daresay this story is one of the most popular in all of scripture. Even folks who aren't Christian can quote it and use it either for their defense in taking a nip now and then or for the many jokes that have arisen from this story. I don't know if you heard about the Methodist minister (surely he could not have been a Baptist!) who was stopped for driving erratically on a lonely country road. The highway patrol officer smelled alcohol on the minister's breath and then saw an empty bottle on the floor of the car. He said, "Reverend, have you been drinking?" "Only water" he replied. The officer asked, "Then why is it that I smell wine?" The minister looked at the bottle and said, "Good Lord! He's done it again."

For most of us, the wine transformed from water is the star of the show. That is not to say that we do not acknowledge Jesus who somehow caused the water to turn into wine. Without a doubt he is the miracle worker at the wedding in Cana, but after 2000 years of hearing about him changing water into wine, walking on water, and feeding multitudes with nothing more than a sack lunch, we really are not surprised by what Jesus can do. We expect miracles from him, don't we?

There was, however, another wonder-worker in Cana that week. We don't know when she arrived or why she was invited, but by the third day of the wedding celebration Mary the mother of Jesus performed perhaps the first miracle that day: she told the Savior of the world what to do—and he did it! The wedding celebration was still going strong, but the host ran out of wine. You understand this dilemma. Wedding celebrations in Rocky Mount—as they were in Jesus' day—are just as much social events as they are religious celebrations. The feasting and celebrating that follow the ceremony are important and the host, in this case, the groom wants everything to be perfect. I once attended a wedding reception in which some miscommunication caused the father of the bride to believe that the wine was running out. Out saw him nervously handing a helper a credit card so that he could run to the nearest grocery store and stock up on whatever wine was available at that hour. You want the party to be perfect.

Somehow Mary discovered that the wine had run out and for some reason she was upset about it. She pointed it out to her firstborn son Jesus, but his response was rather cryptic and sounds very rude and disrespectful for he said to his mother, “Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.”

It seems that both Mary and Jesus understand that he has the ability to do something about the lack of wine. Jesus is resistant. Is he thinking, “This is not my party or my responsibility.”? Is he trying to remind his mother that he is not ready to do anything miraculous in a public way? (We wonder what things Mary already seen through the years.) Is he trying to tell her that he is not yet gifted in this way?

Whatever Jesus meant by his curt response, Mary completely ignored him. She turned to the servants standing nearby and said, “Do whatever he tells you,” motioning to Jesus with her head. I imagine Jesus shaking his head, sighing, and telling them to fill the empty jars with water. Jesus does what his mother tells him to do and the wedding feast is saved. Apparently Jesus’ hour had come! Never underestimate a mother’s assessment of her child’s abilities or her ability to get him to use them. Mary, like most mothers, was also a wonder-worker that day.

There are times when we are confronted with a need or challenge and we feel as if we are not ready to tackle it. The time is not right. We don’t have what it takes. Our hour has not yet come.

Fortunately, God and others see in us what we sometimes do not see in ourselves. We are all gifted, but not in the same way. Some gifts, like the ability to play the organ or piano artfully, to sing beautifully, or to paint or write with exquisite talent are obvious to us all. But far more of us are gifted in other ways that are perhaps more subtle: teaching children, creating ideas, managing a business, leading a community, keeping a household together, repairing a car, turning a yard into a garden, transforming a few ordinary minutes early in the morning into a meaningful time of prayer and communion with God, comforting a friend, organizing a project, inspiring others, being the presence of Christ to someone.

The Apostle Paul reminded the Corinthian Christians that they were all gifted, though not in the same way. He pointed out what must have been obvious in that fellowship of believers some of them had the ability to speak wisdom or impart knowledge. Others enjoyed a unique spirit of faith. Some

of those people had the gifts of healing, miracles, prophecy, and the discernment of spirits. Some of them could speak in various tongues while others had the ability to interpret what was said. Different gifts, but all given by the same God.

We are no different. Today we recognize fifteen people in our congregation who have special gifts. We have seen what they can do and we have asked them to use their gifts on our behalf and they have agreed. And yet, if they are the only ones to use their gifts, if we depend upon them for all of the ministry of this congregation, then the wine will quickly run out. Their energy and resources will be depleted long before our work is done. That is why today we stand in Jesus' place and Christ takes on Mary's role in telling us that the wine has run out. In other words, God is looking directly at each and every one of us, pointing out that we have been given special gifts and abilities, and calling on us to use them—not later on—but right now. Our hour has come!

I was reminded last week that Martin Luther King, Jr. was initially reluctant to get involved in the civil rights movement. He was young. He did not have experience in such things. He had other things he wanted to do. But when Rosa Parks decided not to move to the back of the bus she said to King, "They are out of wine. Do something about it!"<sup>1</sup> He did and this weekend we celebrate the transformation of our nation by the guarantee of equal rights for all people.

We often here of people who see a need and act. They cannot wait around for someone else to make a move so they take on the task themselves. Years ago a group had compassion on people who had no place to sleep at night and began offering beds at the Church of the Good Shepherd. United Community Ministries was born. People in this congregation along with others in the community saw valuable old buildings beginning to deteriorate and decided to save them. We now enjoy a restored train station and the Imperial Centre. Downtown is taking on a new look and purpose. Forty years ago someone discerned that our community would need better healthcare than the existing hospital could provide and Nash Health Systems was initiated, today providing excellent care for people in this region. Fifty eight years ago a group of people discerned that Rocky Mount needed

---

<sup>1</sup>Nancy Rockwell, "Cana—An Unexpected Time," *The Bite in the Apple* (January 13, 2013); available online at: <http://biteintheapple.com/cana-an-unexpected-time/>.

a new house of worship on what was then the outskirts of the city—and Lakeside was born!

You do not have to be born of the Virgin Mary with a celestial star marking the place of your birth to do miraculous things in this life. The disciples, a mismatched group if ever there was one, spread the Gospel throughout Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond. Paul, an enemy of the faith, became its first missionary. Throughout the centuries folks just like you and me were asked to do things they thought could not be done. By the power of God's Spirit, however, the tasks were accomplished and the world is better for it.

You are a gifted people—each and every one of you. Your hour has come. It is time to look within yourself, recognize your gifts, and use them in the ministry of the church and for the glory of God. The wine is running out. Do something about it!

January 20, 2013

## Prayer of Thanksgiving and Intercession

Gracious God, in the often frantic pace of our days, we sometimes forget to stop to thank you for all that is good in our lives. Our blessings are many and our hearts are filled with gratitude for the gift of living, for the ability to love and be loved, for the opportunity to see the wonders of creation and the beauty and variety of the people around us, for work and play and rest, for minds that create and analyze, bodies that move and function and hearts that dream and feel. In the silence of our souls, we thank you most of all for your unconditional and eternal love revealed to us in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Even as this week our celebrations will honor Dr. King's efforts to heal divisions in our land, teach us, O God, to build new bridges and cross new divides within this community. Teach us to reach out beyond these walls to ease the suffering that engulfs so many lives. Grant us wisdom and courage to face the complexities of our world and to seek solutions with creativity and mercy. Give us grace as we struggle with our often competing responsibilities of seeking change where it is needed and peace where it is possible. Help us to be a people of compassion and to respond to those in need out of the abundance we have received from you. Teach us to be merciful even as we have been shown great mercy.

We thank you on this day, O God, for these our brothers and sisters whom we have called out from among us and who have answered that call to serve. Through the power of your Holy Spirit, give them grace and power to fulfill their ministry. Make them faithful in their service and constant in advancing your gospel in the world. May they follow the example of Jesus, who washed the feet of his disciples and set the needs of others before his own. Indeed, this is our prayer not only for these whom we have called as deacons but for each of us and all of us who call ourselves your children. In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and by the power of your Holy Spirit we seek your mercy and we offer our prayers. Amen.

Elizabeth J. Edwards  
Associate Minister

January 20, 2013

Deacon Ordination Homily

We have come to one of those occasions in the life of our church that one might call "momentous." An experience is momentous because it stands out from other events around it. Its importance leaves a lasting impression upon all who experience it firsthand as well as upon all who experience its effects later on.

Such an event took place centuries ago when the group of believers in Jerusalem began to grow and the needs of the faithful increased. Listen to Luke's account of the choosing of the first deacons:

Now during those days, when the disciples were increasing in number, the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food. And the twelve called together the whole community of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should neglect the word of God in order to wait on tables. Therefore, friends, select from among yourselves seven men of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this task, while we, for our part, will devote ourselves to prayer and to serving the word." What they said pleased the whole community, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, together with Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. They had these men stand before the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. The word of God continued to spread; the number of the disciples increased greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

Acts 6:1-7

As an act of worship today, we will ordain new deacons and install all of our deacons for service over the next year. Ordination conveys no special powers or privileges. It confers no rank. It is our affirmation of the calling of these persons to be special ministers among us. Deacons are first and foremost servant leaders and ordination is our blessing upon their ministry and our commitment to support them in all that they do.

What we do today will impact our church for the year ahead and for years to come. The leadership that these deacons provide will determine the course our church takes. The ministry and care they offer to us will determine, in part, how we respond to their leadership. As we offer them our blessing, we pledge to them our energy and prayers as well for the betterment of our church and the sake of the kingdom of Christ.

We are grateful to those deacons who have just completed their terms of service: Shawn Crumley, Elizabeth Hedgepeth, Bill Hoyle, Laura O'Neal, and Ann Winstead.

We are grateful to those deacons who will continue to serve as they already have: Alfred Ayscue, Jerry Carter, Frank Maynard, Sam Johnson, Carol Lucas, Craig Parker, Jim Martin, Hank Strickland, Don Raper, and Dorrie Wright.

We welcome those deacons who join the active Diaconate this year: Jerry Hamrick, Louis O'Neal, Stuart Todd, Jill Ward, and Joe Whisnant. I would now ask Jill Ward and Jerry Hamrick to stand for their ordination.