

**Pastor Roy's Sermon from January 17, 2016 (2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Epiphany)**

Gifts of personality, interest, ability, and training—brilliance hidden in the ordinary. To us these feel like plain water, but in the hands of God our gifts are an enactment of the miracle of water changed into wine. Our moments feel ordinary, but they are truly extraordinary when the Spirit is working in us and through us. In every way imaginable, God is at work for life, hope, and love. Grace is that if we offer ourselves and lean into the mercy of God, water becomes wine.

In Isaiah's words, we are no longer forsaken nor desolate, but crowns, jewels, persons of delight, vindicated, redeemed for life. God rejoices over us. Picture that! Our common lives and efforts—that God rejoices in the beauty and goodness—each moment is valued.

The Psalmist (36:5-10) proclaims the love and faithfulness of God, as strong and lasting as the mountains and the deeps. With God is abundance, never scarcity. The well of life never runs dry. The light of God is never extinguished, even by the darkest of nights. Though the worries of life threaten to eclipse mercy, we are reminded that abundance is a simple creation fact and we needn't worry that we must take short cuts in living lives of faith and trust.

The gift of God is our common experience lived out in abundance and the glory of God shining forth no matter what our experience may be. Our response to God's faithful provision is gratitude, joy, hope. The gifts of the Spirit as Paul suggests in I Corinthians are freely granted to us. Sometimes in the commonness of our lives we have to dig around, we have to search for how God is working in our simple acts of generosity and expressions of hope and encouragement. Sometimes the Spirit is hidden. Sometimes the joy is quiet and unexpressed. I fear that often the wine of our daily lives, the wine of our moments is mistaken for water and we miss the profound mercy which flows through us and reveals the glory of God. We miss it. We think we are cut off. We forget that we are interconnected for joy and gladness, that our gifts express the hope and abundance that is always there, but all-too-often unnoticed.

Jesus turning water into wine is the sign of our life of faith. Water to wine is the Holy Spirit leading us and guiding us and blessing every effort, every moment. O to be mindful of the wine of the Spirit ever-present in our lives. It is there. Prayer connects us to this hope. Prayer opens us to the constant invitation to be in communion with God and one another. Prayer is the connection to the abundance of the wine of the Spirit.

Again, this is not prayer which asks God for stuff. This is the prayer which slowly teaches us to listen to the Spirit's voice speaking hope and peace into our lives, into our world. Prayer is not about us getting what we want and think we need. Prayer is about God getting what God wants, is about God's peace becoming, mercy, grace, and life forming us in communion with the Spirit. True prayer brings a mindset of openness. Prayer is waiting and letting go of all our expectations and demands. Prayer is honesty about our greatest fears and deep dreads. Not substituting what we want, but accepting what is offered, trusting that our surrender will open our eyes to the abundance and freedom of God.

May we ponder in prayer that God is turning our water into wine. May we have eyes and ears and minds of faith, so that we may offer our common moments and opportunities for the Spirit to show God's glory all around us and within us. God is at work! Thanks be to God.