

Pastor Roy's sermon from January 20, 2019

Jesus turning water into wine is one of my favorite miracles. Most of the miracles in the Scriptures are about healing or about safety. But this one is about joy and celebration, and generosity. I can just picture Jesus and his mother deciding together what and who is worthy of the miracle of abundant blessing. Wine at the wedding feast was a sign of blessing bestowed on the newly married couple. To run out was seen as worse than embarrassing, it was "bad luck." Turning the water into wine, Jesus as much blesses his mother as he blesses the brand new family.

And the conversation between Jesus and his mother might be as important as the water turning into wine. The path to blessing is one of conversation and yielding. We might think of Jesus as one who always knew God's will for any situation before him. But clearly in this moment he would have preferred to allow the celebration to end naturally. But he becomes a servant of his mother and of all those who would have been otherwise distressed and suddenly there is an abundance of wine and *blessing*.

[John calls it the first of the signs to reveal his glory. And the disciples believed in him. What is glory? What does it mean that they believed in him? One of the challenges in reading the Bible is to resist the urge to supply our own answers that arise as we read it. We all have an idea what glory is. We all have our own assumptions of what it means to believe in Jesus. But what does this miracle tell us about what it means to believe in Jesus and to wonder in his glory?]

Jesus has a conversation with his mother and he yields to her wishes. The sign unfolds as a result of his faithfulness to his mother. God's abundant blessing is poured out because Jesus is *flexible*.

And what does the wedding family do to deserve this blessing? Do they even ask for it? No. Jesus simply acts on his mother's compassion.

We are tempted to believe that every spiritual blessing or lack thereof is the result of our effort. We are tempted to be anxious that somehow we will mess up our chances of finding blessing if we don't make the right decisions and follow the proper protocol. Oh, we talk about grace but we still feel as though everything is up to us. I know I do. Plus, sometimes we feel so unworthy that we are convinced that we cannot be part of God's blessing. If we were more worthy it would all work out better. We would be helpful to God. Sure we don't deserve anything,

but we just keep trying to prove that we really can pull this off. That you and I can save the day, or at least be helpful.

And here comes Jesus doing a miracle and not even telling the important people that he did it. Remember? Only the servants know that a miracle has happened. The head waiter thinks somebody blew it and accidentally mismarked the good stuff and now it will be wasted on folks who can no longer tell the difference between the good and the bad. That is a lesson in itself—the abundant blessing of God is poured out with abandon and it doesn't matter whether it is appreciated or not. Perhaps we are being reminded that rank and class have nothing to do with the blessing of God. If anything, those who need help and realize it are more available to notice God's abundant blessing.

The good news revealed in our texts today is that, as Isaiah 62 says, God rejoices over you, and me, and it's not because of our own competence but because we are beloved. God is love. And not only are we the focus of God's joy but the Spirit pours out abundant gifts on us so that we also can rejoice. By the gift of God we are part of the story of blessing.

Everything is a gift. Faith is a gift. Love is a gift. Finding ourselves in this beloved community is a gift. The fellowship we share among these who are abundantly blessed, not with possessions, but with opportunities to enjoy the fellowship of God's free and unearned welcome.

May we live into this welcome and allow it to flow over us and on to our neighbors and each other. Thanks be to God.