

January 16, 2022

“No Ordinary Time”
Sermon by Rev. Susan Drake

Psalm 36:5-10

*Your steadfast love, O Lord, extends to the heavens,
your faithfulness to the clouds.*

*Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains,
your judgments are like the great deep;
you save humans and animals alike, O Lord.*

How precious is your steadfast love, O God!

All people may take refuge in the shadow of your wings.

*They feast on the abundance of your house,
and you give them drink from the river of your delights.*

*For with you is the fountain of life;
in your light we see light.*

*O continue your steadfast love to those who know you,
and your salvation to the upright of heart!*

John 2:1-11

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.” And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.” His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.” Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, “Fill the jars with water.” And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, “Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.” So they took it. When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom and said to him, “Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now.” Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

Sermon “No Ordinary Time”

When I read this passage about the wedding in Cana, for the first time I saw humor in this scripture. Maybe because I had just spent time with our son and I had, let’s say, urged him quite a bit to do what I thought he should be doing.

You know what I mean, you should be taking your vitamins, you shouldn’t drink so much caffeine, you should cut your hair, get more sunlight etc.... so I actually heard this conversation between Mary and Jesus as one of those conversations between a mother and her son.

Here’s how I heard it:

Mary: “Jesus,”

Jesus: “What Mom?”

Mary: “They’ve run out of wine”

Jesus: “That’s none of our business, Mom!”

Mary: “Jesus, do something, you know, like you do”

Jesus: “But Mom, I’m not ready to go public with any of that yet.”

Anyway, what I saw in this was that Mary was telling Jesus that it was their business, because the hosts were their friends, and their friends had a need.

So, even though reluctant at first, Jesus doesn’t just turn a little bit of water into wine, he makes about one hundred and fifty gallons of it. And according to the scriptures, it was the good stuff! No boxed wine for Jesus!

Something also very important in this story, at least to first century Christians, is that it was symbolic that he used the water jars that were set aside for a purification ritual.

So in his usual manner of disliking those things that were religious rituals that divided people into those categories of clean and unclean, pure and impure, he turns something used for purification into something used for celebration, something for celebrating love and joy together.

Time and time again Jesus undermines those old purity codes. He touched the unclean lepers, he sat with the unclean women, and tax collectors. etc. Instead of doing things that divide people, he brings them together and he shows them what abundance looks like, that there is enough to go around. God’s grace is something we will never run out of because God can always make more.

Rev. Dr. King understood this. That so much of racism is a fear that there is not enough to go around, that we are going to run out of something so we can’t share what we have.

He preached that in God there is plenty and that all the obstacles put in the way of people of color come from our fear. Fear that someone else is supposedly going to get what is ours. But equity and justice aren’t pie.

Creating a system where everyone thrives doesn't take away a thing from those of us that the system was created around.

He understood that in America, we have abundance, we have an abundance of prosperity, we have an abundance of freedom, we have an abundance of resources, but we still live with our minds set in scarcity and fear that there isn't enough.

Behavioral Psychologists suggest that this is one of those primitive throwbacks from the times when we didn't have enough as a species, where we weren't protected from the elements, where we did run out of food.

That now those primitive fears have left us stuck in the mind set that we don't have enough so we have to continually get more, and more, and more and we have to have stores of everything so we never run out and we have to protect what is ours.

Politicians capitalized on this primitive instinct time and time again. Stirring up that fear that there isn't enough to go around and that those people, just fill in the blanks, are going to come into our lives and take what's ours, our jobs or our way of life.

Dr. King would have been 90 yesterday. One of the gifts that studying his writings has given me is a deeper understanding of Jesus as Liberator and enlightener, as advocate and equalizer and to understand the transformative power of who he was.

He transformed water into wine overflowing, he transformed a couple of loaves and fishes into food for everyone, he transformed our understanding of God from angry, punishing, taskmaster, into a God of love and acceptance and abundance.

And God can transform us from a divided nation living in denial to a healed one that lives into Dr. King's dream of the kingdom of God.

I sat in on a zoom meeting about microaggressions the other day by the black support group where I work. I understood what microaggressions meant somewhat being that I live in the framework of gay and woman. They are little behaviors that on their own aren't a huge deal, but when you have to deal with them 24 / 7, year after year they wear on you.

For me they are things like, "you preach pretty well for a woman", or "I think you would look better with longer hair and a little lipstick", but listening to the black people I work with blew my mind. Things that didn't just irritate and wear on them but were obstacles placed in their path that could sabotage their careers, and that is within a corporate structure committed to having internal equity.

I was sickened by some of the stories they shared and it didn't take long for me to have that thought, we are still so far away from Dr. King's dream. Yes, we all can tell a story of exceptions to the norm but racism is not something that is going to go away until we do the work.

Eradicating racism is the work of white people, not the responsibility of African Americans. We have to own our responsibility.

Until we fall out of love with the narrative that we hang onto so tightly, that all you have to do in America is work hard for success. That there is an equal playing field throughout our nation. Until we let loose of our sacred narratives, we can't open ourselves to hear the stories of others and hear that not all Americans feel like they are living in the land of freedom and abundance.

You know Jesus isn't the hero in the story of the wedding at Cana, is he? Yes, he performs the miracle, but it's Mary right? Mary is the one that identifies the problem and works toward a solution, urging Jesus into his gifts, urging the servers to help him, she is the activist in this story.

We have to be like Mary to recognize the needs of others and speak out about it and take action and make it our business.

If you look around you notice that the banners have returned to green. In church-speak that means that Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany are over and we have returned to ordinary time. Does anything about the present feel ordinary? Not to me. And I'm not just talking about the pandemic.

We know it in our gut that something has to change because we have a whole lot of people out there that are scared but too afraid to show their fear so they just show their anger and they blame everything that went wrong in their life on others.

They have been fed lie after lie by the power hungry and self serving and that lie is always based on a model of scarcity, that there is not enough to go around and it is the fault of others.

Did you know that the idea that preachers shouldn't preach about politics is a relatively new one in the scope of Christianity? Guess when it came about? Yep, right before the Civil War. Many denominations barred pastors from speaking out against slavery and to do so would cost them their ministerial standing. And still today, many pastors often treat issues of racism as taboo, too political.

Dr. King showed us that we are often called into service of God in political ways for the sake of the gospel. That will never be the safe path to tread, that will never be an ordinary path, but we have to remember we serve an extraordinary God. May we all be like Mary, to speak out when we see a need and to believe that God will pour out abundant solutions. AMEN

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WHEN YOU
SEE A NEED**

**God will pour out
abundant solutions**

-Rev. Susan Drake



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