

The Second Sunday after Epiphany
Year C
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by
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Isaiah 62:1-5

Psalm 36:5-10

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

John 2:1-11

“Loving God, here and everywhere, help me to proclaim your values and bring in your New World.”

We have just started a new year, a new decade, and many of us were asked “What is your New Years resolution?” Perhaps you joined an exercise or fitness group, decided to review your dietary guidelines and eating patterns, or vowed to change something else you feel would improve you. This is a very good time for us to take a good look at our spiritual wellbeing and incorporate some positive transformations here as well.

In today’s gospel, we hear about how Jesus changed the water into wine at a wedding in Cana. Chapters 2-12 of John are often called the Book of Signs because in them Jesus performs signs or miracles that reveal his glory. A sign is more than a demonstration of power; a sign reveals something — points to something beyond itself. Through these signs, we have come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. But these are not stories that should be taken at face value, but like many other stories in the Bible, they have interpretations and symbolism which are relevant to each one of us and our relationship to God.

Jesus was not flamboyant when he changed the water into wine. Only the servants and his few disciples near him realized what he had done. This action was done at a wedding, which is a celebration where people enter into a new life, joined together and transformed in a new bond. Just as in the our first reading from Isaiah,

“For as a young man marries a young woman,
So shall your builder marry you,
And as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride,
So shall your God rejoice over you.”

We are all transformed at our Baptism and married into a life with Christ. A life we celebrate with our Eucharist every week. For us the water of purification we receive at our Baptism is fed by the wine we receive at this table. Fed and renewed, we are sent out to carry on Christ’s teachings.

As I was taking my dog on our daily snowshoeing walk, I was reflecting on this gospel reading and how it could intertwine in my own life and the life of this family here at St. James. I now have a good base through the woods which allows me to easily navigate and therefore observe and enjoy God’s beauty and natural splendor all around. Sort of like resting within these walls and surrounded by our Christian family and the familiarity of our lovely windows and architecture while enjoying the rituals of our service. However, every once in awhile, I encounter a fallen tree which challenges me. It pushes me out of my comfort zone, off my well trodden path, and forces me to embrace the unknown and heighten my senses while I move forward. This tree, which has given seeds of new life, offered safe haven for many of God’s creatures, and fed countless others is now directing me to challenge myself. Similarly we all have met with obstacles in our everyday lives which have caused us to alter our course—whether it was the loss of a leader or friend, change in our work status, or simply inevitable weather events such as the recent earthquake in Haiti. We here at St. James have lost friends, rectors, and even Bishop Jim Kelsey. These people have influenced us by offering us spiritual support, guidance, and direction. As I trudge forward through a new path in the snow I’m keenly alert

and aware to what is around me. Often I see things I might otherwise have missed like a small hummingbird nest, the tracks of a rabbit or fox, or catch the glimpse of a soaring eagle through the opening in the canopy of trees. I know my destination of home will be reached safely, but the path may be new, challenging, and exciting. As we move on here at St. James, we know our destination of Home with our Heavenly Father will be reached. Now we need to embrace the challenges this New Year brings. We need to look around and relish God's glory around us and in us as we move forward on our new path.

Jesus said to his mother that "My hour has not yet come". But he did not run from the need that was placed in front of him. Surrounded by his closest friends, he quietly allowed God to work through him; and he, therefore, moved forward on his new path as the Messiah, complete with new obstacles and challenges. We can learn from this lesson. Here we are surrounded by our Christian family and friends. We have Christ within us. The Holy Spirit of our baptism. Our marriage with the Trinity. We celebrate our baptismal purification with wine at the Eucharist. Fed with the spiritual food and drink, we are sent out on our new path to do the work God has prepared for us to do. We are not asked to sit comfortably within our safe walls, but challenged to reach out and strike out in new directions to spread the word of God and extend our fellowship to all.

Just as in our Epistle reading from 1 Corinthians:

"Now there are a varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone."

We each have our own gifts. I don't know how to tweet on twitter, but some of you do. Audrey and I are only beginning to learn Facebook, but several of you are adept and comfortable with that medium. Several of you are members in other community organizations and groups both socially and through work which brings you into contact with many people. Whatever your unique gift, remember it comes from the same Spirit and using it in the service of God spreads the good news to others. We at St. James have quietly and comfortably practiced our faith safely within these walls. We have met challenges and altered our paths (even accepting mutual ministry) while keeping true to our faith and traditions. Perhaps our hour has come and it is time we stepped forward and offered ourselves and our service to those outside our familiar parish doors. Phillips Brooks said:

Do not pray for easy lives;
Pray to be stronger people.
Do not pray for tasks equal to your powers;
Pray for powers equal to your tasks.
Then the doing of your work shall be no miracle,
But you shall be a miracle.

Today we heard about the first sign or miracle Jesus quietly conducted which began his ministry, even though he felt his "hour had not yet come". As we begin this New Year and decade, let us embrace the gifts and power God has bestowed upon each of us to spread His teachings and good news. Let us, each in his own way and supported by one another, make St. James and the openness of our Episcopal tradition be known to others in our community.

Reach out and celebrate the love of Christ.

Amen