

In all my conversations with my pastor friends,  
I have yet to find one who would rather do a wedding than a funeral.  
While funerals are hard, weddings can be crazy!  
In my previous life, as a professor who was ordained,  
I officiated at a number of my student's weddings,  
and I've officiated at the weddings of a friend and of friends' children.  
One memorable wedding for a student of mine took place at a state park on a river,  
in July. It was around 98 degrees (sounds pretty good today when it feels like -23!)  
with high winds.

I'm not sure what was more distracting, losing my place as the wind turned  
the pages of the ceremony in my notebook—even though they were in plastic  
sleeves!—such that I lost my place several times,  
or the boater who parked behind us and cracked open a cold one to watch the  
festivities.

I officiated another wedding at a brand-new event center. It was set up more  
like a concert venue and less like a church sanctuary, and the spotlights were so  
blinding that I couldn't see the congregation. Thus, I couldn't see that I forgot to  
tell the congregation to sit down after the bride came forward until well into the  
VOWS.

Right before Anna and I exchanged vows in the peace garden at the synod  
office, she realized she had left the rings in the office. So my friend Justin ran up to  
get them and thus became our informal ring bearer.

I'm sure if we all told tales of things we've seen at weddings or heard about  
them, there would be no shortage of laughs.

John, in our gospel this morning, tells a tale about a wedding, the very  
familiar Wedding at Cana. In John's telling of Jesus' story,  
this is the first of seven signs that Jesus is the incarnate word of God. These  
signs, to quote John chapter 1 and the end of our text this morning,  
show forth the **glory** of Jesus.

“Glory” feels a bit like an old-fashioned word, meaning “high renown or honor won by notable achievements.”

The Greek here is *doxan*, from which we get the familiar word “doxology.”

The Hebrew word, which is the basis for the Greek word, is *kavod*, which connotes “importance,” or “heaviness,” or “weightiness.”

Apart from references to things like “glory days,”

we usually associate glory with God for all the things God is and we are not,

substantive,  
praiseworthy,  
permanent.

However, the story takes some interesting and unexpected turns, expanding our notion of God's glory to include Jesus' *human* attributes.

Take the interaction between Jesus and his mother.

Interestingly, and in contrast to the other gospels,  
she only appears here and at the foot of the cross

And she is never called by name, just,  
“the mother of Jesus.”

The story tells us she is at the wedding,  
and Jesus and his posse are also there.

And then there is the exchange between the two of them.

It's really not what we'd expect. Frankly, it's pretty human.

Jesus Mother says to Jesus, ‘They have no wine.’

Much like any mom might say,  
“Your room is a mess,” or,  
“the trash needs to be taken out.”

Jesus's reply sounds a lot like that of any son who hears his mom point out something that needs to be done: “So what?”

He even uses harsh language, saying,  
“Woman, what is that to us? My hour has not yet come.”

The hour, of course, refers in John's gospel to his death, resurrection, and ascension. Jesus seems to be saying that he's got better things to do than deal with a wine shortage.

And I wish we had a video of what happened next. Did Jesus' Mother give him a  
"mom look," you know that look that says,  
    "I hear what you are saying,  
    and I love you,  
    but you are full of . . . something."

You may think that your hour has not yet come, but guess what! It has!

Theologian Karoline Lewis suggests that  
"The exchange between Jesus and his mother is really quite funny" . . . .  
"Jesus' mother notes that the wedding hosts have run out of wine. Jesus'  
response is that they should have hired a better wedding planner.

But then, she tells the servants to do whatever Jesus says. [Maybe it's like] . . .  
encouraging your child to get on the school bus for the first time: "Come on,  
you can do it! I know you can!"

And so she put the ball squarely in Jesus' court  
as she just goes forward and tells the servants to  
"do whatever my son tells you to do."

And Jesus responds in a big way,  
perhaps even bigger and better than his mother anticipated.

If you do the math on the 20-30 gallon jars you get somewhere between 600  
and 900 bottles of wine! And very good wine at that! Lavish, generous,  
celebratory abundance!

And this abundant generosity of God  
stands in direct contrast with the scarcity in the world.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Commentator Carol Lakey Hess has an excellent observation about the needs of the world being met  
by the extravagance of God. Notice the reversals we see here:

In the face of the scarcity of the world and there not being enough because the wine has run  
out, the abundance of God fills the jars to the brim. In the scarcity of the world, being practical is the  
usual way to go. Use the best first so they won't notice the cheap stuff later and save yourself some  
money. But the abundance of God produces the best wine, at a very unexpected time. In the scarcity  
of the world, Jars are used for ritual purification, not so you can get inebriated! But with the  
Abundance of God Anything and everything can be used for God's good works, even "holy  
purification jars" . . . to the tune of 600-900 bottles of wine!

I suspect that it's easier for us to relate to the "scarcity" of no wine than to the "abundance" of 900 bottles of wine. Certainly, that's the case here at AHLIC. Our building is aging and needs lots of TLC and care, which, thankfully, our members of the Finance Property and Administration Committee and other folks graciously provide.

Surely, we can relate personally to times when we lack resources, relationships, and fulfillment.

You may feel scarcity in your personal life, too. You don't have the resources you wish or even need. There is a lack, an absence of what's needed,  
not enough care,  
not enough attention,  
not enough health,  
not enough money,  
not enough love.

Those are normal human feelings. We all feel those at various times.

But. . . we believe in and worship an abundant and generous God.

And whatever scarcity we feel,  
what if God is poised to provide new, excellent wine,  
lavishly, in abundance, beyond our imagination?  
What if God is ready to help us celebrate? What might that look like. . . ?  
What if. . . ?

But here is **one more piece of this story** that I want us to think about.

Even as we celebrate God's generosity,  
and dream of what God might do,  
I'm struck by one other connection to this story.

Notice Jesus's mother's awareness.

What if *we are called to be like the mother of Jesus*,  
constantly voicing the concerns of the people to God  
in confidence that God will make it right. . . ?

Mary detects what's wrong. She notices what's lacking. Mary sees the need. Mary resists. "It should not be this way," she concludes. She persists, and she resists. And her son makes it right.

**Tomorrow is an interesting day.** As you know, it's the inauguration day of our new president. The new administration has made many promises about what is to come, and we'll soon find out the new order of things.

**Tomorrow is also Martin Luther King Jr. Day,** a day when we remember the civil rights activist who acted for justice and change,

and was cut down by an assassin's bullet in the blue sky at the age of 39.

He would have been 96.

Like the mother of Jesus, Dr. King voiced the concerns of people in need and expected God to act.

However, voicing the concerns of those in need is not easy or popular. While history has generally been more generous and affirming of Dr. King and his work, King was hated by many in his day. At the time of his death, he had a 75%

*DIS-approval rating.* He was not well-liked in his day.

He spoke truth to power,

like John the Baptist,

like Jesus.

... and all three were killed for it, by the way. . . <sup>2</sup>

Hear these words from King's "I Have a Dream" speech:

"I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character."

With the rise of White Nationalism—and *White Christian Nationalism!*—have things changed for the positive in our nation? Do we judge based on character, or skin color?

And what of this quote from the Rev. Dr. King:

"In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies,  
but the silence of our friends."

For those in need, for the poor, the weak, the marginalized,  
and the vulnerable,  
for our neighbors, will we speak up?

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<sup>2</sup> Hear these words from Dr. King's 1963 Letter from Birmingham Jail: Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. . . . We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.

What would it look like if we followed Mary's and Dr. King's lead, and  
What if we spoke truth to power now?

To our political leaders and the emerging American oligarchs?

Called out those who spew hatred, blame victims, ridicule the weak and vulnerable,  
and refuse to offer aid to those in need, spreading disinformation?

What if we sought to counter lies with truth? Counter Hate with Love?  
Counter vengeance with compassion?

What do you think, when we hear these things,  
can we say, kindly and lovingly,

“this isn't right. This isn't what God intends.” Can we do that?

And might that be the thing that helps bring about the lavish abundance of God's  
love?

In a world where there is enough for everyone,  
might calling out the injustice  
lead to a world where everyone has enough?

So here we are, here you are, at the intersection of  
The needs of the world  
And the abundance of God  
How then will we live?

My hope, my prayer, is that we will speak up, like Mary,  
And in so doing,  
play a part of  
In the unleashing of the generous abundance of God,

And in so doing, we will show forth the glory of Jesus,  
the lavish and generous abundance of water turned into wine  
from a lavish, generous, and abundant God. **Amen.**