

## The Reverend Marjo Anderson

C: Epiphany 3 – Wedding in Cana  
Isaiah 62.1-5, Psalm 36.5-10, 1 Corinthians 12.1-11, John 2:1-11

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### “Let Jesus Turn Your Water into Wine”

What an amazing story!

According to John, Jesus’s first miracle was turning water into wine.  
And what’s amazing about it is that out of all the miracles Jesus did,  
this is the one John chooses to tell us about first.

That’s very different from the other gospels.

In Mark Jesus’ first miracle is exorcising a demon from a man;  
in Matthew he heals a leper;  
in Luke he performs an exorcism.

In fact most of the miracles that Jesus performed  
were healings of illness, injuries, and permanent disabilities –  
healings that were desperately needed  
and which had a huge impact on the daily lives of those who were healed.

In addition, Jesus stilled a storm to provide safety for sailors,  
he provided food for a multitude of hungry bellies,  
and he provided success for fishermen who kept coming up empty.

All of these miracles helped to fulfill basic physical needs – health, safety, food, work.

But changing water into wine?

It sounds unnecessary, frivolous, a waste of his power!

And yet, John tells us that right after he was baptized and has called 5 disciples –  
the first thing he does is to turn water into wine – and on a huge and impressive scale!  
He didn’t just hold up a cup of water and, like a magician, change THAT into wine –  
but he turned 120-180 gallons of water into wine!

And... not just ANY wine! The BEST wine!

Now I’m sure I have not tasted the best wine in the world,  
but the best wine I have tasted is Trockenbeeren Auslese which sells for about \$12/oz.  
A gallon would cost \$640.

The amount we’re talking about here is somewhere between \$75,000 and \$115,000!  
Even if the steward only meant that it was the best wine of the evening,  
we are still talking about a huge quantity and tremendous quality.

So why does John start off with this story?

Well for me it flows directly from the way John began his gospel.

John wants us to know something that Mark and Matthew and Luke didn't tell us.

Mark's gospel begins with a man named Jesus being baptized  
and the spirit of God falling on him.

Matthew and Luke begin with a baby that's born, a baby that we know is special  
because according to Luke angels lead shepherds to worship him,  
& according to Matthew, a star leads wise men from the east to bow before him & adore.

But none of these writers make clear what John does.

*"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.  
He was in the beginning with God.*

*All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being.  
What has come into being in him was LIFE!*

Jesus as the Word of God speaks all of creation into being –  
and everything that has come into being has life!

Not just humans or animals or plants that have life,  
but rocks and mountains and planets and stars are filled with life –  
since every atom is filled with divine energy.

And then John tells us that this Word, this God, this Source of all that is,

*"became flesh and lived among us,  
and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth."*

And....

*"From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace" – upon grace upon grace....*

This image of God is so vast that it stretches across the vast universe,  
so high and so wide and so deep that we simply can't comprehend it.

Instead, like ants scurrying around their ant hill, we scurry around in our tiny worlds,  
completely focused inwards on our problems and challenges.

We allow fear and doubt to build walls around our minds and hearts and bodies and souls  
that separate us from God and from each other.

We settle for so much less than God desires for us and for our world.

I heard a pastor speak on Thursday evening

and he said that for him, the gospel can be summed up in 3 words: you deserve better.

Now maybe that goes against what you've been taught –

that you are by nature sinful and unclean and you don't deserve anything but judgment.

But if you are God's beautiful creation, God's beloved child, God's royal offspring,

if every atom in you is full of divine energy,

if you are filled with the breath, the wind, the Spirit of the Living God,

if Christ lives in your heart by faith,

then you deserve so much more than you can even ask or imagine.

And so does each person you love and each person you hate

and each person you look up to and each person you look down upon

and each person you know and each person you don't know.

That's what this miracle is about.

Did they really need wine? Could they have gotten along without any more?

Could they have gotten along with lesser quality or lesser quantity.

Of course.

But Jesus came that we might have life and that we might have it abundantly!

I have said since the first day I arrived –

that if we do what God calls us to do, God will give us everything we need to continue.

And praise God, God has!

When I came over 10 years ago we had over \$600,000 in our endowment fund.

Despite annual operating budget deficits of \$60,000 or more per year,

we still have over \$600,000 in our endowment fund.

Part of that is because we received \$100,000 request

and part of that was because of the stock market

and part of that is because of Funds from the federal government.

But here's what I want you to understand.

We were not blessed by that bequest,

and we not blessed by the stock market,

and we were not blessed by the federal government.

We were blessed by God

who simply chose to use Betsy Bulkley and the stock market and the federal government

as channels for the blessings God poured out on us.

Before Betsy Bulkley died did any one of us expect to receive \$100,000 from her estate?

I don't think so.

Back in 2010 could anyone here have predicted how good the stock market would be to us?

The answer is no –

because every year people have said, "Well, we can't count on the stock market next year!"

Back before the pandemic could any one of us

expected to receive \$40,000 from the federal government.

The answer is no.

God does not need the stock market or a particular individual or the federal government to pour financial blessings on a congregation.

God can use any channel God chooses.

So when we begin to think that the blessings

are due to the stock market or to an individual or to any other thing

we are missing the entire point of what we profess to believe:

our blessings all come from God and our God is a God of abundance.

This story about Jesus turning water into wine is not a myth. It is TRUTH –

a truth in 4 parts:

1. Our God is powerful enough to do absolutely anything.  
 If God wants to rain down hundred dollar bills from the ceiling, God has the power to do that.  
 If God wants to arrange for somebody in our congregation to win 5 million in a lottery,  
 God has the power to do that.  
 We don't have to make our decisions based on what we think we can arrange for ourselves  
 or what we think we can count on others to do for us.  
 We just have to trust that God is powerful enough to do absolutely anything.
2. Our God loves us enough to do absolutely anything for us.  
 God created us so obviously God loves us as God's own beautiful creation.  
 God in Jesus loved us enough to *"take on flesh and live among us"*  
 and not only to live among us, but to suffer, and be crucified, and die for us.  
 We just have to trust that God loves us enough to do absolutely anything for us.
3. Our God wants us to trust in his boundless power and endless love.  
 And trust is not always easy.  
 It's not easy because we would rather keep control and trust in ourselves,  
 rather than give up control and trust in God.  
 It's not easy because often we have to wait a long time for our big dreams to come true.  
 God didn't call Abraham to start his journey to the promised land  
 and the promise of as many descendants as the stars in the sky until he was 75  
 and then Abraham had to wait 25 years just to have Isaac.  
 It's not easy because sometimes God intentionally has us wait in order that God's power might be revealed.  
 God didn't call Moses to lead the people out of Egypt until he was 80 and Aaron was 83-  
 and he didn't just ask the Pharaoh once, he had to ask 10 times. Why?  
 So God could demonstrate his power thru 10 plagues & then thru the parting the Red Sea,  
 miracles that we are still talking about TODAY, thousands and thousands of years later!
4. And finally, our God wants you to have more than just the basics;  
 God wants you to have more than an ordinary life.  
 God wants you to have an extraordinary life, an extravagant life, an abundant life!  
 That's what this story is about: God wants to turn your water into wine.

There are so many things that are uncertain in my life right now,  
 so many things that are beyond my control,  
 so many things that I have to just trust God to work out in God's good time.  
 And as I wait for the signs and wonders and miracles that I know God is going to do,  
 there are times when I feel like I've run out of faith and hope and trust and joy.  
 But Jesus showed up to provide something akin to some sparkling wine for me.  
 I always walk 5 miles a day, but the last week it's just been too cold,  
 and between the doubt and discouragement and lack of exercise and the cold,  
 I prayed, "God, I believe that one of the things you've promised me is that I could spend time in Jamaica  
 and I was just wondering if maybe you could confirm that for me?  
 I just need something little to boost my faith."

I prayed that at 12:30 am. At 4:30 I was woken up and I happened to look at my phone.  
 I noticed there was 1 notification on Linked In.  
 I opened it and read: "JAMAICA! Wonderful to see Jamaica qualify  
 in the Beijing Olympic Men's 4-Man Bobsled event for the first time since 1998!"

God loves you! God wants you to have abundant life!  
 God wants you to have so much more than you can ever ask or imagine!  
 So, trust in God's absolute power and God's absolute love, wait for God to answer the big prayers,  
 and in the meantime, if you've run out of anything – health, energy, money, love, joy, peace, patience –  
 simply ask God to supply your need – and God will do it.  
 You may have to provide the water, but God WILL turn your water into WINE. Amen.