

**The Lessons Appointed for  
Use on the  
Second Sunday after the  
Epiphany**



Year C  
RCL

Isaiah 62:1-5  
Psalm 36:5-10  
John 2:1-11

**The Collect**

Almighty God, whose Son our Savior Jesus Christ is the light of the world: Grant that your people, illumined by your Word and Sacraments, may shine with the radiance of Christ's glory, that he may be known, worshipped, and obeyed to the ends of the earth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the

Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, now and for  
ever. *Amen.*

Isaiah 62:1-5

For Zion's sake I will not keep silent,  
and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest,  
until her vindication shines out like the dawn,  
and her salvation like a burning torch.  
The nations shall see your vindication,  
and all the kings your glory;  
and you shall be called by a new name  
that the mouth of the LORD will give.  
You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the  
LORD,  
and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.  
You shall no more be termed Forsaken,  
and your land shall no more be termed Desolate;  
but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her,  
and your land Married;  
for the LORD delights in you,  
and your land shall be married.  
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.

*Psalm 36:5-10*

***Dixit injustus***

5 Your love, O LORD, reaches to the heavens, \*  
**and your faithfulness to the clouds.**

6 Your righteousness is like the strong mountains,  
your justice like the great deep; \*  
**you save both man and beast, O LORD.**

7 How priceless is your love, O God! \*  
**your people take refuge under the shadow of  
your wings.**

8 They feast upon the abundance of your house; \*  
**you give them drink from the river of your de-  
lights.**

9 For with you is the well of life, \*  
**and in your light we see light.**

10 Continue your loving-kindness to those who  
know you, \*  
**and your favor to those who are true of heart.**

**1 Corinthians 12:1-11**

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. You know that when you were pagans, you were enticed and led astray to idols that could not speak. Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says “Let Jesus be cursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except by the Holy Spirit.

Now there are 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. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same

Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.

*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

Every time the Revised Common Lectionary turns to John's Gospel, I feel I should warn you that we are traveling a mysterious land and care is strongly urged.

**The Gospel of John is, in some respects, the most difficult and mysterious of all the Gospels. Its meaning and message, as well as the circumstances of its composition, are not easily discerned and give rise to considerable disagreement. Yet, from the early Church onward, John's Gospel is widely regarded as one of the most profound spiritual texts within the Bible.<sup>1</sup>**

All this is to say that if you would be blessed from John's Gospel, you will have to tread carefully lest you lose your way. You cannot read it as you would read a newspaper account.

The passage today, the wedding at Cana, is the Scriptural foundation of my ministry, as I've told you before,

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<sup>1</sup> The New Interpreter's® Bible One-Volume Commentary, Beverly Roberts Gaventa and David L. Petersen

so it is precious to me. That's personal to me, and tale enough for another time. Our task today is to drink from the wine John has given us, and to do so, we will have to sharpen up our scholar's skills and abandon one of our preferred ways of reading Scriptures – as a list of “Thou shalt” and “Thou shalt not” intended to win God's favor so as to get us into heaven when we die. There's a meme going around Facebook which shows a statue of Jesus with his hand covering his eyes in regret, saying, “I gave them the Beatitudes and all they quote is Leviticus.” The point is that for many of us our preferential reading of scripture is as a series of journalistic snap-shots of Jesus' life seen through the eyes of a neutral observer telling us what to do to win God's favor, as though it were possible to “win” God's favor by human effort. The Bible is deeper than a list of “Thou shalt” and “Thou shalt not”, and we see that as we traverse

the mysterious land from which the Gospel of John is written. If you would hitch yourself to John's Gospel, you must be prepared to do some work. Let's begin.

Our story opens at a wedding in Cana of Galilee at which an awkward social situation has developed – they have run out of wine. It's no big deal. Even Jesus sees it as inconsequential, asking his mother, "What is that to you or to me?" Running out of wine at the reception is no more than an embarrassing social faux pas. Nobody died. If we read it with our scholar's eye, though, it IS a big deal (or John wouldn't have mentioned it). John is telling us that something important is wanting and that God is making a mighty move to provide that which is needed for the story of His Creation to proceed.

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.

The six stone jars of water represent Judaism and its ritual purifications. John is telling us that the new arises out of, yet surpasses, the old. The changing of water into wine is the revelation of divine glory, a glory derived from Judaism and now manifest in the flesh of Jesus.<sup>2</sup>

Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

His disciples believed in him, but we have become so dog-gone comfortable with Jesus, that I wonder if we are able any more to perceive His glory. We’ve heard the stories about Him since before we could speak. Most of you have faithfully followed the path Rev. Garda led you through the traditions of this church since

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

childhood so faithfully that it operates almost automatically. That's why you can get by with a part-time, poorly trained pastor. But the terrible normalcy of long tradition carries with it an awful risk. We can be blinded by our well-loved traditions until we become, in a sense, drunk and then become satisfied with inferior wine. John is telling us that a new and more wonderful world is springing from the faithful Jewish soil which has carried the promise safely through the centuries, but that this new wine demands a change in long held traditions.

We're beginning to see that there's a lot more here than an awkward moment at a social function and a magic trick. John is showing us the flowering of God's plan, formed before Creation, safely kept by His people for eons, and now bursting forth into the world, replacing what was with what is to be.

Neither is John to be read, as sometimes is done, as a condemnation of the Jewish people, of whom God spoke through Isaiah:

You shall be a crown of beauty in  
the hand of the Lord,  
and a royal diadem in the hand  
of your God.

You shall no more be termed For-  
saken,  
and your land shall no more be  
termed Desolate;

but you shall be called My Delight  
Is in Her,  
and your land Married;  
for the Lord delights in you,  
and your land shall be married.

John is announcing the arrival of the Word made flesh, the self-revelation of God within His Creation, the flowering of His relationship with His people Israel. The new arises out of, yet surpasses, the old.

“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.”

This isn't a charge against Jews. It is a charge against all of us who seek the comfort of the familiar and so resist God's sovereignty. God is God. It is His privilege to move within His Creation as He will. That should knock us flat, but we've heard it too often and familiarity breeds contempt. In the Epistle for today, Paul writes to the church at Corinth,

You know that when you were pagans, you were enticed and led astray to idols that could not speak. Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says “Let Jesus be cursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except by the Holy Spirit.

If you are not speaking by the Holy Spirit, you're part of the problem. You might be popular, as some of the TV preachers are, but you are part of the problem. You

are offering inferior wine to those who thirst for the good. The Holy Spirit must inhabit your very soul to lead and direct your words and your actions.

I read something this week by Thom Schultz. He was talking about the struggles of the American church. An acquaintance asked him, “Don’t you think the main problem is biblical illiteracy? Nobody knows what’s in the Bible anymore.”

Schultz replied, “While I would agree that, in our culture, Bible knowledge seems to be thin and getting thinner, I don’t believe this is the root of the problem. It’s something far more basic. It’s not so much that people aren’t centering their lives around the Bible. It’s that too many aren’t centering their lives around Jesus. ... It seems the Bible has been elevated above its author.

“This loss of proper perspective plagued the landscape 2,000 years ago as well. Jesus did not make his



physical appearance on Earth because people were delinquent in their study of the scriptures. In fact, many were quite learned in the written Word, but failed to center their lives around the one true God. The Word became flesh so that the people would come to know, love and follow the living God, and be redeemed through the sacrificial love of the Savior.”

John’s Gospel speaks to us from a mysterious land. We who would understand must drink of the new wine. Nobody said it was going to be easy.

AMEN

## BENEDICTION

Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker were unavoidable during the 70's. Their message, attractive to so many, was, at its foundation, that God's favor was for sale. Their message was in tragic error, and that error worked great sadness in their lives and the lives of those who heard them. I beg of you. Read John's account and know that the Word of God walked the earth and now lives within you. Remember Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount:

Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.<sup>3</sup>

The Lord bless you and keep you;  
the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you;  
the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you

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<sup>3</sup> Matthew 7:21 World English Bible

peace.

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Optional parts of the readings are set off in square brackets.

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