

**Pastor Madelynne Lindsey**

**January 27, 2019**

**YOU ARE INVITED TO THE WEDDING**

**JOHN 2:1-11**

Let us pray: O Lord, we pray, speak in this place, in the calming of our minds and the longing of our hearts, by the words of my lips and in the thoughts that we form. Speak, O Lord, for your servants listen. Amen.

"They have no wine." With those words Mary speaks a truth about our lives, a truth that at some point we all experience. There comes a day when the wine gives out. The glass is empty. The party is over.

On that day, life seems empty and dry. There is no vibrancy or vitality. Nothing is growing or fermenting within us. Our world is colorless and tasteless. The bouquet of life is absent and we are living less than fully alive.

Mary's words hold before us some serious questions and wonderings. Where has the wine of our life gone? What relationships have run dry? What parts of us remain empty? Each one of us could tell a story about the day the wine gave out.

It might be about the death of a loved one or the loss of a friendship or marriage. Some will speak about their search for love and acceptance. Some will describe their thirst for meaning and significance. Others will tell of their guilt, disappointments, or regrets.

Many of the stories will be about fear of what is or what might be. Stories of failure and self-doubt abound. Some will describe a longing and desire for something they cannot name or describe.

The storyline of unanswered prayers, doubts, or questions is known by most. They are not all stories from the past, however. Some of us are living those stories today. Martin Luther King, Jr. must have felt the same way about there being no wine.

But, behind his story was the hope and desire for a wedding of all our lives. He came and we come to the wedding at Cana not simply as guests and spectators, but as participants, as a bride or groom, seeking union, intimacy, and wholeness.

Despite his best efforts, good intentions, and hard work, however, it seems that the wine of his life gave out. And sometimes it feels the same way for us. No matter how often we refill it, our glass remains empty. There is never enough wine. As the day wears on, we become increasingly aware that we cannot replenish the wine from our own resources.

That day seems like a disaster, an embarrassment, a failure. That must have been what it was like for Martin Luther King, Jr. and for the

bride and groom at the wedding in Cana. "They have no wine," Mary tells Jesus.

That is not a condemnation or judgment but simply an observation, a diagnosis. This is not about the wine but about the people. It is a statement about the human condition.

It is about you and me as much as it is about the wedding in Cana of Galilee. It is a spiritual condition. It is about our inner life, our way of being, more than the circumstances and the world around us.

Too often we live with the illusion of our own self-sufficiency. That we can control our own lives, we don't need anyone or anything else. That illusion is shattered on the day the wine runs out and the jars of our life stand empty and dry.

That day confronts us with a new truth as old as creation itself. We are the recipients, and not the creators of our life. We were never intended, nor expected to live by the sufficiency of our own resources. Christ is the true vintner and chief steward of our lives.

Regardless of how it feels or what we think about it, the day the wine runs out is the beginning of a miracle. Christ does not simply refill our glasses. He transforms our lives, turning water into wine.

That which was colorless is now vibrant red. That which had no taste now tingles the tongue. That which had no fragrance now has a full bouquet. That which had no life is now fermenting, bubbling up, active, and alive.

Our lives are filled to the brim with the good wine; intoxicating us with the life of God, inebriating us with the blood of Christ, and leaving us under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

That's the miracle at Cana and it has never ceased happening. Every moment of every day Christ pours himself into the empty jars of our life. He is the good wine; extravagant, abundant, endless.

When you go to a wedding, even the pastor likes to engage in a little good wine which reminds me of a story: Once after a marriage, the pastor was invited to the reception and he was in line to pick up the little favor that had the table number on it.

Each of the favors had a guest's name on it, and they were in little groups according to what table you were assigned. In front of the pastor in line was a young man about 8 or 9 years old and his mother.

Well, this young man got kind of excited when he saw his name and his mother's - "Hey, we're at table 7". But there was a noticeable change in his tone when he saw who else was at table seven.

"Oh boy, we're at the pastor's table he exclaimed. Not being able to contain himself the pastor spoke up and said, "Yes you are!" Now, the pastor didn't take it personally.

He knew it wasn't him, but it was the collar. Seriously, the pastor's table is not where most wedding guests want to sit. Not if they are there to have "a good time."

I remember growing up in a Episcopal home, where my mother and grandmother would invite Father Berry to our home for a family party, and everyone was instructed to put all the liquor away until Father Berry left. Everyone always seemed a little relieved when he would leave early.

People just have this idea about pastors being holy. So, you've got to watch your P's and Q's or the pastor will tell God on you. I guess some people see pastors as God's spies, or God's drones. The bottom line, I think, is that people don't want to be judged, especially at a wedding.

Maybe, people worry about how the Pastor might think about them or how The Pastor might not want to have any fun. And I don't think that stops with just The Pastor. In the Episcopal church, the minister must drink all the wine left in the cup after serving communion.

And on one Sunday, the minister fell on the floor and someone remarked, "Oh he's drunk from drinking all that spirit." Maybe he was having a little too much fun. But who are we to judge him. Very often, folks who aren't in church often don't want to be around Christians, because they don't want to be judged.

They want to be around others who know how to have fun, and that's not Christians. Don't you think it is significant that when John wrote his Gospel he put this story - about Jesus and his disciples at a wedding - at a PARTY — as the very first miracle Jesus performs?

Of all the stuff Jesus said and did in his three years of ministry, John put this first. Jesus at a party, turning water into wine, and not communion size wine but party size good wine.

You see, every time that good wine is poured, our lives are changed and transformed. We are brought "out of error into truth, out of sin into righteousness, out of death into life".

I can't tell you how that happens. I don't know how it happens. I only know that it does happen. I have tasted the good wine. I have experienced the miracle at Cana in my life and seen it in the lives of others.

I have experienced moments when death is turned into life, sorrow into joy, and despair into hope. I have seen that happen in the lives of others. I have been surprised by fear that was transformed into courage and seen people do things they never thought possible.

I have watched empty lives be filled back up. I know of broken marriages that became vibrant and life-giving. Those and a thousand others like them are the miracles of Cana.

However, I do wonder why Jesus, on his first journey, would take his followers to a party? Didn't they have work to do? Didn't he have principles to teach? Wasn't his time limited? How could a wedding fit with his purpose on earth? Why did Jesus go to the wedding?

The answer? It's found in the second verse of John 2. "Jesus and his followers were also invited to the wedding." Why did they invite him? I suppose they liked him.

I think it's significant that common folk in a little town enjoyed being with Jesus. I think it's noteworthy that the Almighty didn't act high and mighty. The Holy One wasn't holier-than-thou.

You just don't get the impression that his neighbors grew sick of his arrogance and asked, "Well, who do you think made you God?" His faith made him likable, not detestable.

Now let me tell you why I think Jesus went to the wedding? I think he went to the wedding to have fun. Maybe that catches you by surprise, to think of Jesus as a party-lover. But he was. His foes accused him of eating too much, drinking too much, and hanging out with the wrong people!

Matt. 11:19 says, "When the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they said, 'Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners! Jesus took time for a party. . . shouldn't we?"

God created us to worship — to CELEBRATE God's goodness. Every Sunday we gather to celebrate together. It's a party! Stuff may not always go well for us out there -but when we're in the world stuff can distract us from the goodness of God.

But one of the themes of this story about the wedding at Cana is that Jesus gets involved in the little things, like a wedding that has run out of wine.

And Jesus gets involved in a BIG WAY — those six jars of wine would fill 6 HUNDRED to 9 HUNDRED bottles. That's a lot of wine, even for a wedding party that would, in Jesus' time, last a week.

We can celebrate because we have a Savior who is involved in the real stuff of our lives. As John wrote in the first chapter of his Gospel, we have a Savior who lived among us, who took up residence in the neighborhood.

And every Sunday we celebrate and proclaim that Jesus died and rose again and dwells not just among us but within and through the Holy Spirit. Each week is a family party!

And there is NO REASON that our celebration should end when we walk out the doors of the church. We CAN communicate the joy of following Jesus — even the FUN of being God's people — in what we say and what we do and especially with our attitudes toward other people.

Christ's glory is revealed, and we are illumined, shining with the radiance of his glory. His glory becomes ours, two lives one glory. "They have no wine," Mary said. But they will and you are invited to the Wedding.

And it doesn't end there, for in heaven we will join the great wedding banquet with the Bridegroom, Jesus Christ, and the Bride of Christ, the church—and there will be plenty of wine.

Perhaps today, like Mary, you realize there is only One to whom you can turn when you have "run out of wine." God wants to fill you to the brim with the wine of His grace.

That invitation from Jesus enables us to celebrate with the spirit of Jesus Christ in our lives by drinking His good wine. The miracle always begins even when the wine gives out. So, I say to you, enjoy the good wine of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Let us pray: Long-awaited Jesus, we anticipate the wedding feast, the celebration of your presence and our connection forever with you. With joy, we praise you for your wonderful power and grace, coming once to give us what we needed and coming again to make all things complete. Amen.