

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.

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 more 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

Water is the life blood of our planet and our very selves. 71% of the earth is water and about 60% of our bodies is water. Truly we are dependent on the bounds of Hydrogen and Oxygen for our very way of life.

I met my wife, Sarah, in college and after dating awhile I also began to meet her family. When I first met Sarah's grandmother, I saw an elderly lady, a bit hunched over from scoliosis, not more than 4'10" on her tip toes and 100 lbs soaking wet. So you can imagine my surprise when I first sat down at her kitchen table and she proceeded to tell a joke about the male anatomy... That was not what I expected.

I recall at least once that one of her six children offered to get her a drink for her lunch, "Mom, can I get you a glass of water." And then, in her Italian American accent she responded, "Water is for washing your feet." That had to have been 15 or more years ago, but it has stuck with me all this time.

Imagine yourself at the best wedding you have every been too. Maybe it was the last one you were at, or maybe it was your own wedding... Imagine all the friends and family around you, everyone happy and excited for the bride and groom, everyone dressed to the nines - wonderful food, wonderful drinks, and it seemed that everyone was dancing, from slow dances, to songs that were more upbeat, to the chicken dance. Everyone had a great time.

Now imagine that party going on for a week. That was the custom for weddings at the time of Jesus. Jesus, and his earliest disciples were guests at the party, just two days before he was in the waters of the Jordan being baptized. But three days later he was at the party. We know the story, of how they ran out of wine for the guests and Jesus was not sure it was time to perform any signs or miracles, but at the insistence of Mary, his mother, he turned the water that was poured into the jars for purification into the best wine that was available to offer. "You saved the good wine until now," the steward told the bridegroom. And John writes that "Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him."

John's gospel is the only gospel to use the words "signs" in place of "miracles". In general, the two words are interchangeable, but what makes it different is John's want to emphasis that the miraculous acts of Jesus were more than the act of healing or feeding in the moment, but there were also giant arrows that pointed to who God is and what the Kingdom of Heaven is like. And this first sign is no different.

First, the timing of it all. Jesus was baptized, and as we talked about last week, baptism is not only about new life, but it is about being baptized into death with Christ. Then three days later, Jesus turns water into wine at a wedding feast. There is a clear arrow right from the beginning that points to Christ's own passion, to his death and then to the joy of the resurrection on the third day. The waters of death are replaced by the wine of new life and it is the best wine of all.

At some point in our history, Christianity became synonymous with boring and somber. We were tempered in our reactions and in our pleasures, in our joy and in our revelry. The puritan settlers, forefathers of the presbyterian faith in America, were renowned with this "moralistic" code of living. They were people of the water, of living their lives out as plainly as possible, not wanting to become greedy or egotistical or consumed by wine or liquor. And there is something to this way of life that is good for us to see and imitate in our own. There is a need for the waters of baptism and the waters of the servant that washes feet. There is a need for the love of sharing with our neighbors and helping those who are in need. Jesus told the servants to fill jar that were used for the rituals of purity - he told them to fill them with water. And we too must be filled with water as well, so that we can see clearly our call to be a servant people here on earth.

But then, somewhere between the jars being filled and the stewards tasting, Jesus changes that water of purity into a wine of rejoicing. It was a wedding, a celebration of love and of life. And in Christ's resurrection the words of Isaiah come to life. "As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you." We are the bride of Christ, the chosen people whom Christ loves and adores. Together, we are the promise of new life and the hope of continued love that reaches out through us into the world around us. And in those everyday moments when we realized that God's love for us is so great that he sent his Son to live and die, but most importantly to live again for us, in those resurrection moments of new life and of hope and of the kingdom of heaven breaking in, that is when we realize that my wife's grandmother was right, "Water is for washing feet." May we celebrate all that God has done in our lives even as we rejoice in the promise of this new year ahead of us. Thanks be to God.