Bringing Out The Best

Sunday, January 19, 2025
John 2:1-11, and Psalm 36:5-10
By Rev. Dr. Chris Keating

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And then there is the story of the one-time Jesus and his mother were invited to a wedding in Cana. It is one of the most famous stories in scripture, and even those who know little about the Bible know this story. It's an age-old story that has given rise to stories like the one Jason Byassee tells of a woman who finds a $20 bill in a parking lot. As she picks it up, she thinks, "What would Jesus do?" Instantly, she decides to take it into storage and change it into wine.

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But it is ludicrous to imagine that Jesus provided that prodigious amount of wine without even tasting it to see how it turned out. Some have tried to explain that by suggesting it wasn’t really wine, just grape juice, but I think they might want to go back and study science. This is indeed a story of water being changed into wine, and it calls us to pay attention to the miraculous, abundant and life-giving gifts Jesus provides.

Epiphany is a season of revealing, a time for telling stories of how God’s glory is made manifest in Jesus. It is a time of telling Good News of that great joy that is given to all people. During Epiphany, we hear stories of God’s grace being extended to people in new and joyful ways. Epiphany is a time of celebrating, and of discovering the amazing promises of God’s redemption.

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divine powers to the other boys in the village. “Watch this,” she overheard him tell his friends. “Anyone want to try some wine?”

We don’t know what prompted Mary’s concern, but it is a fair guess that John is reminding us of her unique role as a disciple. Where others saw this as a crisis, she clung to the reminder of God’s promises. Somewhere in the depth of her being she understood as only a mother can that her son would be the giver of extravagant gifts. As Frances Taylor Gench observes, Jesus came that we might “have life,” and “have it abundantly.” John has said that he came to bring grace upon grace—and here, Mary, the very first disciple, understands that better than anyone else.

The second thing to note about this story is that this story is unlike other miracles. There is no pressing injury, no great suffering to alleviate, no scourge of illness. Instead, he comes to bring joyful abundance. He adds new joy to the ordinary celebration of life. He makes people smile and laugh. It makes me wonder why and how the church has lost this desire: why is it that the culture views us as a place of stillness and silence? Why is the church not viewed as a place of celebration, a place that brings out the best?

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