

This is the season of Epiphany and in these times, we are encouraged to let go of our held ideas and open our minds to something new that God is doing in our midst...to be prepared for “an epiphany”. An “Aha, I’ve got a glimpse of the holy” moment.

Today’s scripture texts—Isaiah 62:1-5 and John 2:1-11—highlight moments where the miraculous meets the ordinary, where God’s presence transforms and reveals wisdom and joy.

Isaiah 62:1-5 began with the prophet declaring, “For Zion’s sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not remain quiet.” The passage bursts with anticipation for transformation: a desolate city and a people once forsaken are renamed as God’s delight.

Isaiah calls God’s people, “a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God” A people once discarded are now renamed "My Delight Is in Her" (Hephzibah). God creates beauty out of ashes and hope out of despair. This image is powerful because it speaks to human longings for dignity, love, and joy. These aren’t just abstract ideas; they’re a vision of what happens when God intervenes, restoring dignity, transforming the ordinary into a reflection of God’s glory.

In John 2, we find another moment of transformation—a wedding feast in Cana. The scene is familiar. A couple, a family, wanted to show their best to the world and minimize chaos to maximize the special event.

The story goes like this: John 2:1-11:

**2** On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there.

<sup>2</sup> Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding.

<sup>3</sup> When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.”

<sup>4</sup> And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.”

<sup>5</sup> His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.”

<sup>6</sup> Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons.

<sup>7</sup> Jesus said to them, “Fill the jars with water.”

And they filled them up to the brim.

<sup>8</sup> He said to them, “Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.” So they took it.

<sup>9</sup> 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 <sup>10</sup> 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.”

<sup>11</sup> Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

Weddings, even today, are full of unexpected twists.

Nothing like that happened at OUR wedding. OUR wedding was perfect (example of sarcasm, Luke) At our own wedding we forgot to light the candles, I wore make-up (the last time I ever wore make-up) and the mascara wasn't waterproof and my tears of joy turned into tears of pain and stinging...that made it into some wedding photos and our video, and I put Bryce's ring on the wrong finger.

At the wedding at Cana, though, a likely week- long celebration, the unthinkable happened...the wine ran out – that would be equivalent to running out of food before everyone was served (which, I'm sorry to say, I did experience at one wedding I attended).

For the chief steward, this was more than an inconvenience; it was a social disaster and the family, and the steward would likely not live down this mistake and would live in shame.

Jesus' mother noticed and quietly nudged Jesus. Though his response suggests the timing wasn't right, she persisted, and Jesus turned the handwashing water into wine—not just any wine, but the best wine.

There's more happening here theologically in the choice of these jars, but for our purposes it's important to note that Jesus was using what was at hand, in an ordinary setting, to bring about something extra-ordinary.

Now, please note: Jesus did not perform some elaborate ritual here. He didn't say a blessing, wave his hands, or otherwise draw attention to himself. The “mumbo jumbo” we often associate with the miraculous is missing. There was a need, and Jesus met it ... at the prodding of his mother.

It all happened in a rather ordinary way. He didn't make a big stink about it – Jesus just prayed and made it happen. In fact, the only ones who knew it were the servants. The servants, like the lowly shepherds invited to be the first to see the newborn Jesus, the servants at the wedding who were often overlooked as “in the background”, were the ones to witness the water's transformation firsthand. THEY were the ones who experienced the epiphany.

The chief steward recognized that the wine in his glass now was better stuff than what previously was served, and he congratulated the bridegroom for an extraordinary act of hospitality. A shrewd person would serve the best stuff first and then, when everyone was slightly tipsy and not as able to recognize the good from the mediocre, serve cheap stuff. But here, the steward noted, the best was saved for last.

These miracles happen all around us every day. Simple actions – a smile – a miracle. Generosity to a stranger, kindness to a bully, a helping hand when everything seems so overwhelming.

Instead of criticism and contempt for failing to store enough wine, unpretentious Jesus, stole into the serving room and showed compassion. The miracle was less turning water into wine than it was showing grace to his host and likely saving the servants from punishment. It was a miracle of compassion.

This miracle at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, set the tone for the rest of John's Gospel. Jesus' miracles always lifted up the lowly. When he fed the thousands on the hillside, the miracle was less that the bread and fish were multiplied than it was that everyone – everyone was fed – the rich and poor, men and women and children. All were fed.

Similarly, the healing miracles healed more than just the body of the individual. Jesus' miracles always considered the whole person – social, mental, spiritual and physical. But it was usually just the physical aspects that got noticed.

As John tells it, people, in general, seemed to approach Jesus just like that steward - not fully grasping the truth, misunderstanding what he was all about, focusing upon his miracles without seeing the truth that lay behind them.

And we today, I think that we've blinded ourselves to witnessing the miraculous around us. This is perhaps because we have seen the term abused.

In this greater universe, God is. And no circumstance is immune to God's presence. Even when we have our doubts, God is faithfully at work. When finally realize what God does or is doing right now, then we're filled with wonder.

The poverty of our present age is that we have lost part of our capacity to wonder. As a result, we assume that miracles are few and far between. They almost have to be spectacular to attract our attention. Is there still a place in this world where we can trust that simple kindnesses, ordinary people, and uncomplicated actions can lead to extraordinary grace? It seems to me that part of the role of the church – of the people of God is to be witnesses of God's miracles, to wonder at God's handiwork that is being born all around us.

Both scripture texts today point to our God who works miracles, not by erasing the ordinary, but by transforming it. In Isaiah, a desolate city becomes a crown of splendor, and a people abandoned find themselves loved. In John, ordinary water becomes extraordinary – what was sure to bring shame was transformed into astonishment, delight, and hope.

As we journey through this winter season, may we open our eyes to the ways God is revealed in and through us. May we see God's miracles, not just in the spectacular, but also in the small, daily moments. And when we see them – let's tell each other. Let us witness the goodness of God to each other so that we can together live with wonder and gratitude, recognizing that God's grace, often quietly and unexpectedly presented, is always at work in our world.