

Sermon: Epiphany II

The Rev. Mike Wernick

January 20, 2019

Year C

Isaiah 62:1-5

Psalm 36:5-10

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

John 2:1-11

On April 6, 2003... Joel and I attended the wedding of my first cousin... once removed... through marriage... Julie... and her fiancé Cary... Cary was a cantor at a synagogue on Long Island... and that's where the wedding was... at the reception... where we were fed... there was chafing dish... after chafing dish... full of food... there was Italian food... Mexican food... Indian food... Chinese food... Greek food... Jewish Deli food... and bagels and lox... it seemed like enough to feed the 5,000... oh... and there was an open bar... the wine... and other adult beverages flowed... and after about an hour... a wall slid open... and we were ushered into another hall... where there was a full sit down dinner... with steak and lobster... the mother of the groom didn't need to say a word... about needing more of anything...

About a week ago... Joel and I watched a movie called... The Avengers: Infinity War... the bad guy... named Thanos... believed the universe couldn't provide enough for everyone... so he wanted to cut down on the number of guests in a radical and murderous way... and many of the Avengers' characters came together to defeat him... there was Iron Man... Hulk... Captain America... Black Widow... War Machine... Doctor Strange... Spider Man... Black Panther... Vision... Scarlet Witch... Nebula... Falcon... and perhaps one divine being... the Norse god Thor... super heroes... who fight evil... and save humanity...

Most of the time... we don't need to be saved from intergalactic enemies... or multidimensional foes... Pastor Joanna Harader [at Peace Mennonite Church in Lawrence, Kansas] wrote... sometimes we do need to be saved from environmental degradation... gun violence... systemic racism... rape culture... we can add... a

devastating illness or fall... perhaps a government shut-down... but sometimes... our desire for a miracle is focused on more mundane problems... getting over a cold... finding a ride to the doctor's office... or finishing a sermon...

In today's Gospel... Jesus and Mary were at a wedding too... but there's a problem... the wine is running out... the text doesn't specifically say... we don't know whose wedding it was... but this may have been the second or third day of the festivities... remember that at that time... weddings often lasted for days... many times they were family reunions as well... and to run out of wine... to fail to be properly hospitable... was to be shamed... and perhaps Mary was related to one of the families... and that may be why she felt bold enough to say something to Jesus... *they have no wine*... perhaps Mary was trying to avoid her family being shamed... *they have no wine*... and so she reaches out to enlist Jesus' help...

In today's reading from Isaiah... when God vindicates Jerusalem after the Babylonian Exile... there is also wedding imagery that celebrates the reunion of God and Zion... God is dressed in the armor of righteousness to redeem Zion... and Zion is dressed as a bride... there is jubilation... and an overflowing abundance which cannot be restrained... and neither can Jesus be restrained... and so water is turned into wine...

We like super heroes... they save us from enemies... and insufficiencies... of all kinds... and part of why we like them... is because we don't need to do anything ourselves... if we just lay low... for long enough... we may escape unscathed... although there may be... some collateral damage...

Six stone jars... all together we're talking about 120 to 180 gallons of water... the water alone... would weigh between 1,001.4 pounds... and 1,502.1 pounds... plus the weight of the stone jars themselves... and Jesus said to the servants... *fill the jars with water*... and let's remember... the servants... at least some of whom are likely women... have no garden hose... no outdoor faucet... no electric pumps... the water is drawn from a

well... bucketful by heavy bucketful... and we don't know how far away the well is... there's no indication of how long it takes... and it seems to take no time at all... but this is a lot of work... that Jesus doesn't do...

Before Jesus called Lazarus out of the tomb... he told those who were standing there to take away the stone... and after Lazarus came out... he told them to unbind him... when Jesus raised Jairus' daughter... he told those present to give her something to eat... in Capernaum... some people brought a paralyzed man on a mat... and because the door was blocked... they removed the roof and lowered the mat down with ropes so he could be healed... and it was the disciples who had to hand out food to more than 5,000 people... and pick up the leftovers... tomorrow... we remember Martin Luther King, Jr... and countless others... whose work shone a light on systemic racism and birthed the Civil Rights Act... in all of these things... we cooperate with God... and God cooperates with us... the Spirit may give gifts... but it's up to us... not super heroes... to use them... it may be God's work... but it's our hands...

I'm not certain if Episcopal priest Fr. Boyd Evans wrote this himself... or just shared the thought... but he said that Christianity was never about individual salvation... and it's well past time for us to get over this notion... because if we don't believe... that our salvation... is bound up with our neighbor's... then we have missed Jesus' message entirely... social justice is humanity's responsibility... it is a corporate responsibility... and there's a difference between ignoring it completely... and acknowledging that although it's difficult work... and may take some time to make incremental headway... like filling water jugs... it is the work that we are called to do... Holy God... make it so...

Mike+