

Grace and peace to you from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

This first Sunday of Lent we hear from John,  
not Luke and Jesus being tempted in the wilderness.  
Our Lenten series title is Tell Me Something Good.  
And the Good News for today is so good it catches us by surprise.  
A lavish wedding banquet.  
Jesus turns water into wine.  
The Good news of Jesus Christ begins with joy!

Remember last week I called us to look for Jesus  
in the valley and the mountaintops.  
In the big and in the small.  
In John's gospel, Jesus opens big and with joy.  
The kingdom of heaven Jesus brings is so good it should surprise us.  
Like the smallest mustard seed that grows to be the tallest tree.  
Like an unruly weed, or fine wine saved for last, the good news is  
abundant and cannot be contained.

But, what do we, what do I mean by Good News?  
Let's take a moment to consider these two words that  
we use to mean (hands out) what?  
Well, if our gospels begin "This is the Good News of Jesus Christ"  
we can find the meaning in what Jesus does.  
Jesus comes into the world for good,  
to be beneficial to the world,  
with the miracle of turning water into wine  
he brings joy and delight.

So, let's set the scene again and imagine how this went down.  
Mary, Jesus and the disciples are guests at a wedding.  
Imagine singing and dancing,  
yes, imagine Jesus dancing along with friends and family.  
Or, if he's more like me, leaning against the wall  
and watching others dance.

Maybe he's having so much for he is extremely annoyed when Mary interrupts with, "they have no more wine".

Who of us hasn't been involved in an embarrassing squabble either as the parent or as the child in front of others?

"what is that to me", Jesus says.

Or maybe both of them are speaking tongue in cheek because they both know what is going to happen- they are both in the know about the surprise and delight about to happen.

What's about to happen is a surprise to those at the party, and if we could put ourselves in that time and place, getting the lived experience of this miracle, we would be just as surprised and delighted, but it's not a surprise to God.

Not to our God who delights in surprising, who longs to give abundantly.

In Jesus' day, wedding celebrations lasted a whole week. Everybody took the week off.

The celebrations were like a long Sabbath with much thanksgiving for the blessing of God upon the couple and the family and their community.

Wine was a central feature in the wedding feast celebrations.

That's because wine was more than an intoxicating liquid to help them really enjoy a week-long celebration.

Wine had spiritual significance for Jewish partygoers. Spiritually, it served as a sign and symbol of the joy and blessing that flow from God into the hearts and lives of God's people.

Wine and weddings were linked to hope for God's<sup>1</sup> people.

So, when it looked as though they were going to run out  
At this wedding in John's gospel it was a crisis.  
Things were on the verge of becoming both a  
familial embarrassment for the family and  
a bad sign for the couple as they were starting their life together.

Mary has complete trust in the miracle to come.  
The servants turn to look at Jesus – hopeful, skeptical, bewildered –  
and Jesus tells them to fill six stone water jars,  
each holding twenty to thirty gallons.  
“And they filled them up to the brim”.  
This is equivalent to **one thousand** bottles of wine!  
And it becomes the best wine ever.  
And the wedding celebration goes from good to unforgettable!

In John's gospel, Jesus' debut act of ministry is not a healing,  
or exorcism or turning tables for justice.  
Jesus' first act of ministry is to help ensure  
a party becomes the best party imaginable.  
It's a total surprise!

Because this...this is who Jesus is.  
Jesus doesn't have to begin with defeating evil because he knows  
ultimately evil doesn't stand a chance against,  
well, a mom's belief in her son,  
strong is that belief, **and**  
a God who's out there doing the chicken dance with the best of them  
and one who loves his mother.  
Evil doesn't stand a chance against a God who is  
not only not afraid of scarcity,

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<sup>1</sup> The Hangover: Jesus Edition. Homiletics Online.

[http://www.homileticsonline.com/subscriber/btl\\_display.asp?installment\\_id=93040722](http://www.homileticsonline.com/subscriber/btl_display.asp?installment_id=93040722)

but laughs in the face of it.  
Evil doesn't stand a chance against a God who will never let  
an empty cistern or full tomb have the final word.  
Evil is predictable.  
But our God loves a surprise because God knows  
the outcome will be the same.  
Every time.  
God's goodness will overflow.  
Every single time.

In this case, it overflowed with 1000 bottles of wine.  
1000 bottles of the very best wine.  
Now, I'm no wine expert, but that's a lot of wine!  
A lot of good wine.  
Jesus doesn't just perform a miracle.  
He performs a sign and a wonder for  
what the world of the new wine looks like.  
This new reality looks like abundance  
and the manifestation of glory.

You can't drink 180 gallons or 1000 bottles of wine alone.  
This over-abundance is a miracle of grace and abundance.  
When your sacred water turns into new wine, it's meant for  
a feast with many seats at the table.

It's meant to unite and form God's people  
to look for the abundance and to share the good news.  
This story calls us to unite as followers of Jesus and share Good News.  
On our Facebook page is a video of some high schoolers in Ohio.  
They were recorded sharing what the good news was  
for them that day or week.  
I suggest you watch it and then write what the good news is  
that you have seen or experienced this week.  
Maybe it's a walk with a friend.  
Maybe it's a delightful sunset.

Maybe it's a good cup of strong coffee.

Maybe it's a negative test result.

Maybe it's a positive test result.

As we journey through Lent, remember that the

Good News of God is so good it surprises us.

The good News is God's lavish abundance and  
the bringing of joy.

Thanks be to God.

Amen.