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January 16, 2022
OMC

You're Turn Jesus:

Isaiah 62:1-5; John 2:1-11; Psalm 36:5-10

Good Morning Everyone,

I hope that all of you are safe and well as you join into this worship service from home this morning. This is my first Sunday back behind the pulpit in 2022 and I am sad not to see your faces in person today. That being said, I am grateful for the thought and care that our re-opening committee continues to pour into their meetings and the guidelines they give to us – especially this month. Like many of you I really enjoyed spending time with family over the Christmas break, cooped up in a relative's house with the assurance that rapid tests had provided me with. I was so grateful for the chance to be in person after a Zoom celebration the last year.

Coming out of that holiday bubble has been very hard. With January numbers on the rise, I find myself stumbling around each day entirely unequipped for making daily decisions. It seems like, at almost two years into a pandemic, we would be good at this by now, pros even, in evaluating risk and implementing protocols accordingly. I hear it being said all around me from friends and professionals that we are all simply going to need to evaluate our own risk and act accordingly. But... I am just so tired. The last two years have transformed me from a very decisive individual to the me who is so exhausted with decision making that I just want to curl under a blanket rather than try and make another call on how to move forward in the world at the moment.

This is the state I have been existing in so far in the month of January, and the energy that I approached our morning's scriptures with. I came depleted and weary, and I read over and over the promises and hope found in our Psalm and our Isaiah scriptures, just willing them to sink in. I would show up each day with a cup of tea, and light a candle and read over these beautiful words and visions for what can be, what will be, and I would sit there waiting for them to take effect. Verses in Psalms proclaiming that we **“drink from the stream of your delights”** that declare that **“in you is the wellspring of Life, and in your light we become enlightened.”**

Promises from Isaiah spoken to a community feeling distress and abandonment that pronounce an assurance of security and emotional fulfillment, the deliverance of God's presence from a time of darkness. In the past, praying out these words from scripture has brought me deep comfort, and stirred me towards a feeling of hope. But I sat sipping my cup of tea and reading these verses and waiting for this effect to take place. I would take a couple notes, and rise still feeling a little sad, a little lost, and still unsure how to interact with the world around me.

Where I did find some connection was in Mary's energy in our Gospel story. I *loved* reading Mary's reaction to Jesus at this wedding party. In the gospel of John, whenever Mary is mentioned, she is called 'the mother of Jesus,' and their way of interacting with each other is so familial I can hear my own mother in this story. Here we have Jesus and his family and his friends, all enjoying themselves at someone else's wedding. Suddenly, they run out of wine. Now this is a bummer, and a problem in a culture of hospitality, but it certainly isn't Mary's problem and it's definitely not Jesus'. See if you can hear any of your mothers in Mary's tone. She goes up to Jesus and says "They have no wine." There is no directive in this statement, she hasn't ordered him to do anything or even put forward a request. But Jesus, like any child that is paying attention knows exactly what is being said between the lines. I laughed as I read this story over and heard various 'observations' my own mom would make growing up: 'there are dishes in the sink', 'the driveway needs shoveling' or 'we've run out of...' and so on.

Then Jesus reacts exactly like the internal groan I would feel when interrupted from the fun of the event to do a chore. It is such a typical child response that Mary does what a busy parent does and completely ignores him, pushing forward the task at hand, and making it clearer than ever that *she* was not asking. Now this conversation has another layer to it behind Jesus' words of "**what does that have to do with me**", because this is before Jesus has even begun his ministry. This groan of 'Mom I'm not in charge of this party,' is actually the question 'how does this relate to my ministry, my purpose?'

Is this what Jesus has come to earth to do, help with an inconvenienced wedding party? Aren't there bigger, bolder things for a Messiah to be taking care of? This is a question that comes up inside me when I bring my own small things before God, or even before other people. With so much pain and distress in our world, how can I call Jesus to the small pains of my individual life? Shouldn't I be able to handle this gloom on my own with the self-care tools I already know? If we pause the scripture story there, at Jesus' question of what his role is, I feel small and deflated. I shrink back and think, yeah this isn't really your job, is it?

But our story gives us strong assertive Mother Mary. She looks right back at Jesus and sends in the people who are in need of assistance. Because she knows exactly who Jesus is, she is Mary who cried of the song of the Magnificent, Mary chosen by God to raise Jesus. She has understood his purpose before he took on human flesh. Mary says nothing to Jesus in our scripture, but in her actions, I can hear her saying 'Boy, I know exactly who you are. You are the Son of God, and the son I have raised you to be. You are the one who cares for all those in need, who lowers himself to the problems of this world and the problems of being human. You are the one that meets needs with generosity, from whom springs an abundance of goodness, who is an unlimited resource of love. You, son, are the one who enters into the hurt and pain of those around you, and helps them not because it is your responsibility, but because you choose to.'

Jesus responds to Mary's confidence with his first act of ministry, the first sign and miracle of this Gospel. Not only does Jesus provide for the need by making new wine, but he fills up 6 stone jars, each of which would have held 15-25 gallons each, with something even better than what they had before. He is creating something new. The generosity in this amount of wine suggests the unlimited gifts that Jesus gives: this transformation into something even better than what was asked for or imagined.

So, I come to worship today, in the footsteps of Mary, and all I can say is *Jesus, I'm out of wine. I have nothing left to pull from. I've run dry and I don't know what it looks like to continue on in this. But you are the Jesus who transforms lack into plenty.*

**Whether human or animal, Yhwh,
you keep us all in your care.**

How precious is your love!

**Whether creatures of heaven or children of earth,
we all find refuge in the shadow of your wings.**

**We feast on the bounty of your estate,
and drink from the stream of you delights.**

**In you is the wellspring of Life,
and in your light we become enlightened.**

(Psalm 36)

You are the God who assures us that we will have enough to go on, to continue in the mission to love this world well. I'm going to keep getting up each morning, but then I'm turning straight to you, my friend. I am determined to live into the goodness of your transformed world, but I'm not sure what that looks like or where I'm going to get the energy to keep stumbling through all of this. So, Jesus, you're up, wellspring of life, I need you, we all do. Thank you for showing up for us. In these times and at all times. Amen.

Sources: New Interpreters Bible Commentary, Believer's Church Bible Commentary

Benediction:

May God's will be done here where we live;
may impossible things come to pass.
May we find strength in the journey
and joy in the struggle,
through the grace of God,
Amen