

Sermon, Epiphany 2C, January 19, 2025

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https://www.lectionarypage.net/YearC_RCL/Epiphany/CEpi2_RCL.html

Almighty God, whose Son our Savior Jesus Christ is the light of the world: Grant that your people, illumined by your Word and Sacraments, may shine with the radiance of Christ's glory, that he may be known, worshipped, and obeyed to the ends of the earth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. You know that when you were pagans, you were enticed and led astray to idols that could not speak. Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says "Let Jesus be cursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit.

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.

John 2:1-11

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, "Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward." So they took it. 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 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." Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

Recent Anecdote: Deb Bluestone (Godly Play and Tutoring)

The work we do in the Church is not separate from the work we do in the world.

Nor is the good of the Church separate from the Good of the World (NOR is the good of the Church OR the Good of the World separate from our own Good for that matter!)

It's all connected. We're all connected.

Nevertheless, when we consider the needs within and around us
(in our own lives, our church, our nation, the world)

We often feel Overwhelmed and Inadequate.

We often feel pulled in too many directions.

Lately this familiar dilemma seems exacerbated

by intense anxiety about our national and global life:

As we prepare for the inauguration of a new president,

And wildfires smolder, and wars rage on, and many worry about their futures and some freeze to death in the present on our city streets.

We think to ourselves: **There's so much to be done! I can't do it all! What then, should I do?**

It's easy to panic, or freeze, or despair, but (as the Angels say: Do not be afraid! Take heart! I bring you Good News!) The Good News is that, because everything IS connected, faithful **discernment** and obedient self-offering and action in ANY ONE sphere has the potential (by the mystery of God's grace) to bear fruit in EVERY OTHER sphere—at home, at church, in school, at the office, in Washington, in nature, and on the streets.

Discernment. Very church-y word. Sounds VERY spiritual and complicated. Doesn't have to be. Sometimes the best method of discernment is to just do a thing and then pay attention to what happens—both within and around you (Pauline). Other times (Pauline's husband, John might remind us) it can be helpful to pause, step back, and take time to think & pray on some questions.

HELPFUL QUESTION #1:

What gifts have I been given? Or, more specifically, **what gifts have I been given BY GOD, TO SHARE, FOR THE COMMON GOOD?**

We sometimes have a tendency to feel shy or inferior and apologetic when we talk about gifts. I'm not as smart, or brave, or creative as so and so. I don't have as much energy, or money, or faith or time as others do. But hear me clearly: **No hierarchy of gifts. No point in comparison.**

In today's Epistle Paul makes this abundantly clear:

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. *To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good...All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.*

The important thing is not the type or quantity of our individual gifts. Rather, the important thing is **the Giver—the Spirit of God and the Purpose—the common good.** (*Godly play: The important thing is not the candle, the important thing is the light. The important thing is not the gift. The important thing is the Giver.*)

[Holly's Resistance Choir-Singers, Song Leaders, Organizers]

So, "What gifts has God's Spirit given me" may be one helpful question in discerning what faithful offering and action means for YOU.

But it isn't the only question.

HELPFUL QUESTION #2

An equally helpful question in discerning our particular call to obedient self-offering or action might be: **“How might God be calling me to learn, or grow, or CHANGE?”**

God’s call is as much about what we have to learn, as what we have to teach. God’s call is as much about the gifts we can receive as it is about the gifts we can offer.

God’s call is as much about how God might want to change US as it is about how We might want to change the World.

How’s that for a humbling thought?

SGN Job Description “Give Work Away”. Time and again I find this to be true—in ministry, in marriage, in parenting, in life. **God calls me into the work/actions/situations that will enable God to change and shape ME more fully into the whole and holy person God has called and created me to be.**

Conclusion

There's no point in trying to close our eyes and shut out the world.

We must humbly and honestly acknowledge the needs all around us: the needs of families, our church, our nation, our world (as well as our own needs)

And we must humbly and prayerfully acknowledge the gifts we've been given to respond to those needs.

Breathe. Pray. Look. Listen.

Discern what gifts you can offer for the common good.

It may not seem like you have everything you WISH you could give, but I assure you: What you have to offer is enough. Your gifts are enough. You are enough. Remember, as Paul teaches: **The Spirit gives to each a manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. And the Spirit allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.** What you have and who you are, is EXACTLY what is needed in this moment—in your life, in the Church, in our World.

As we move towards the conclusion of this sermon, I want us to turn briefly to recall **Today's Gospel lesson, the story of "The Wedding at Cana" from the Gospel of John:**

RECAP Gospel Story

Let me leave you with this thought:

Friends: when you hear Jesus asking you to do something—no matter how unlikely it might sound or how inadequate you might feel—take a risk and give it a try—even if you aren't sure how it could help or where it might lead.

The Gospel reminds us of the Power of Jesus to

take something that seems ordinary—Water; and by the power of God's Spirit mysteriously transforms it into something Extraordinary—wine.

The Gospel reminds us of the Power of Jesus to

take what we believe has been set aside for one purpose (purification) and by the power of God's Spirit, mysteriously transform it to fulfill another purpose (celebration.)

So it is in our own lives (especially when we feel like we've run out of what we need most). I believe we can trust Jesus to take whatever we DO have to offer—our gifts AND our weaknesses, our time, our energy, our efforts, our work, our labor, our learning, our lives—(however inadequate they might seem) and by the Power of God's Spirit, mysteriously transform our ordinary offerings into something new and extraordinary.

Perhaps **your life** (as limited and ordinary as it might seem)—offered to Jesus and transformed by the Power of the Spirit—**will become a Sign** (like the Water-turned Wine at the Wedding in Cana). Perhaps your life will become a sign, by which Jesus reveals God's Glory in the world. May it be so. Amen.