

St. David's Episcopal Church, 1/16/2022, John 2:1-11 (*Elizabeth Felicetti*)

We are in the season of Epiphany until Ash Wednesday: a season of signs and wonders. On that first Epiphany the wise ones followed the star all the way to the Christ child, and there they offered him gifts. Last Sunday, the first Sunday after the Epiphany, John the Baptist baptized Jesus in our Gospel reading, and the Holy Spirit descended like a dove.

Signs and wonders.

Today we have Jesus' first official miracle in the Gospel of John, Christ changing water into wine at the wedding feast at Cana. I remember learning about this miracle in Sunday School as a child. I remember teaching the preschool children about this miracle using Kool-aid.

Kool-aid, because really, *this is a wackadoodle miracle*. Seriously, Jesus? And Mary? So what if they ran out of wine at your cousin's wedding? Sure, that's embarrassing, but that's not like the miracles about the man born blind or the man whose child died or the woman who had been hemorrhaging for twelve years. Why should the Son of God waste his first official miracle on poor party planning? Isn't this just going to encourage people to keep praying in parking lots "Hail Mary full of grace, help me find a parking place"?

We spent Advent preparing the way of the Lord and sang by candlelight on Christmas Eve about a silent, holy night. Christ was coming to change the world, and making sure a wedding reception doesn't run out of booze doesn't seem to me to live up to that expectation. But it's not all about me and my expectations, is it? Or about you and yours. God surprises us and does not do what we expect, or what we think God should do. I still learn this every day and will probably work on this until I die. God seems entirely uninterested in my ideas about running the world.

I've been listening to a podcast lately about small churches with big impacts, and they end each episode asking what small thing lately has brought the guest—always the pastor of a small church—what small thing has made a big impact on that pastor. That's what I think about with this miracle. It was a small thing with a big impact.

Imagine that steward, suddenly presented with wine—good wine, better than what had already been presented to the guests. Imagine the relief he must have felt, because the party could continue. Imagine the happiness of the bride and groom, their parents; the guests, including Mary. They were having a great time and now it would not end abruptly.

Not a miracle on the scale of a grand healing, but that wedding was life-changing for that couple. That wedding was important to that family and to any children they might go on to have. They may have descendants living today. The story told about their wedding for the rest of their lives could have been "that wedding that ran out of wine," but thousands of years later, we still talk about their wedding as the place where Jesus Christ, savior of the world, performed his first miracle. We don't remember this couple's name: all we remember is that Jesus and Mary were there, and Jesus turned water into wine.

When I set aside my own prejudices, my own ego, I learn from this miracle that God is interested in everything, no matter how small or ordinary. I remember what Jesus said about God and

sparrows and about all of the hairs on our head being counted. Nothing is too small—or too large—for us to take to God in prayer. And in this time when a pandemic has held the world hostage for two years, we need to hear that message. The overarching pandemic does not make the smaller things that have happened to us less important. We are allowed to have our happiness and sadness apart from all that. We do not have to say that what is happening to us is unimportant because it's not as big as something else that is going on.

What is happening in your life is important, even if it does not sound as dramatic as what you heard is happening in someone else's life, or even though everything else sounds so bad in the news. You are important, and what happens and does not happen to you is important. God treasures you. God calls you by name. You are God's. Every hair on your head is counted.

On Epiphany, the wise ones followed a star from different corners of the world to Bethlehem, to the Christ child. When Jesus was baptized, the Holy Spirit descended like a dove and declared that Jesus was a beloved Son in whom God was well-pleased. At this wedding in Cana of Galilee, Jesus turned water into wine.

What are signs and wonders in your world right now?

Last Sunday, one of our young adults came to the ten o'clock service to run the camera to livestream our service so that those who cannot come right now could still worship virtually. Someone streams the service every week, and every week it seems like a miracle, and last week I was so happy to see Cameron. Sometimes kids graduate from high school and we never see them again, but there he was, volunteering for a job that is more important now than ever.

Rick is not with us this morning but comes here Sunday after Sunday and sings and walks up for communion, even though he has some trouble speaking and two years ago could barely walk. There's another miracle with a big impact every week.

Connie had a sore throat on Thursday so we decided to have her stay home in case she had COVID so the Alonsos came in to print and fold the bulletins. Another ordinary miracle. Also, she finally was able to test Friday night, and is negative.

Yesterday we buried Bill Isenberg out here in our memorial garden. Because of our current pandemic protocols, this had to be a private service. We could not have fit all of the people who wanted to be a part of Bill's service. I compared Bill to Barnabas in the Bible, that great but humble encourager in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles, because Bill encouraged everyone in our church to claim their gifts. You would be good at this, Bill would say. Epiphany emphasizes light in the darkness, and Bill Isenberg was such a light. Maybe he wasn't a magi whom children would dress up like for millennia, but his gifts were a miracle, a wonder, a sign, as important to us as those wise ones. Bill was one of our wise ones.

We Christians need so-called "ordinary signs and wonders right now just like we need bigger miracles. Where can you spread light in the winter darkness? What signs and wonders can you see and show to others?