

January 16, 2022- New Wine is Flowing
By Rev. Jenny for St. James in St. Marys and for you!

Jesus is attending a wedding with his mother and his disciples. Word reaches Mary that the wine is about to run out and there are still many days of celebration, as was the custom of the time. It would be a great insult to the guests to run out of wine. Many would be offended and there would be an outcry and maybe even rebellion.

One of the joys of my calling is being able to perform marriages. Just the word wedding brings up so many beautiful pictures. Brides in white dresses. Grooms in tailored suits. Solemn services and joyous receptions. Lots of food and drink. Music and dancing.

The first miracle Jesus performs is this one, turning water into wine. And not just a little wine. Six stone jars, each holding 20 to 30 gallons! That is a lot of wine! At a minimum, 120 gallons or 546 litres! Clearly, an abundance of wine. And good wine at that.

So, what does all this mean to us? I have not witnessed water turning into wine myself nor do I know anyone who has. So, is this just an old tale from an old book? Definitely not, so let's explore it.

As I stated earlier, I have had the pleasure of being involved in many weddings over the years. And trust me, they do not always run smoothly as planned. Dresses get lost. Flowers are the wrong colour. Food runs out. Too many guests show up. Too few guests show up. The hall double books. Guests come drunk or get drunk and disorderly. The list of things that can go wrong is endless.

Just like the embarrassment the couple would experience if the wine ran out, social disaster could strike any wedding. Sometimes it is an actual disaster. Sometimes it is only in the eyes of the bride. This can evoke feelings of shame and anxiety and a desire to fix the problem.

We are in the middle of a situation that is causing anxiety and a desire to fix it. Our lives have been turned upside down for almost two years now. We just want it fixed, don't we? We lament the losses in our lives. We miss being able to do what we want when we want. We want to socialize. We want to worship in person. We want to travel. We want to hug.

And we might lash out at God. Like Isaiah, we do not keep silent. Or, we may struggle to express our true feelings to God and just praise God like our psalm does but that is not being true to our feelings, is it? God wants to hear whatever we have to say. Good, bad, everything. It is okay to be frustrated with God. It is okay to say, "hey God, we have run out of wine here." We have run out of energy and passion and hope.

The verses of psalm 36 that precede today's reading sound a lot like I do right now.

Transgression speaks to the wicked deep in their hearts; there is no fear of God before their eyes. For they flatter themselves in their own eyes that their iniquity cannot be found out and hated. The words of their mouths are mischief and deceit; they have ceased to act wisely and do good. They plot mischief while on their beds; they are set on a way that is not good; they do not reject evil.

I am getting so tired of being limited in what I can do, and I know I am not alone. And I am feeling resentful of those who are not getting vaccinated and putting the rest of us at risk and causing this pandemic to linger on and on. I understand personal rights. I understand that some cannot get vaccinated due to health reasons. But I still feel frustrated. I am tired of them thinking they know more than the experts. *The words of their mouths are mischief and deceit; they have ceased to act wisely and do good.*

And I tell God all about it. I vent my frustration to God. I ask God why God hasn't intervened. I have times where I lose hope.

But God is steadfast. God is fully aware of what is going on. The wine is running out. Health care workers are exhausted. Hospitals are filling up. Parents are losing patience with home schooling. Children are missing their friends.

But new wine is being made folks. We are receiving gifts we never dreamed of. This service is being sent out far and wide. Anyone in the world can access it. Who would ever have thought it possible?

We are finding new ways to be church. Yes, some day we will return to in person worship again, but our services will also continue to be broadcast far and wide.

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And so will others. One of the benefits of being off work was I had the opportunity to tune in to other church services. I will be honest. Some I engaged with and found very worshipful. Others, I had difficulty staying with.

But you know what, that is another gift brought about by this pandemic. In the past, if I could not worship with the local church, I either had to travel or not worship at all. Now, from the comfort of my home, I can worship with a congregation anywhere in the world. It is far from the perfect way to worship but it still allows us to be in community in some way. We are not able to be with the people in the Diocese of Amazonia, but we can worship with them. We may not understand the language, but we can still pray for them and experience the worship and music just as we would at a wedding where the language wasn't English.

And if we tune in to a service and do not feel it is a good match, we can find another. While I was off, you were given several options of services to join online. I pray you found some to be a match. But I am glad you are back!

The new wine is starting to trickle in. If we look hard enough, we can see that amazing things are happening even during this pandemic. God truly is at work. The opportunity to worship virtually is just one example of how the wine is flowing. Isaiah tells us:

You shall no more be termed Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate; but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her, and your land Married; for the LORD delights in you, and your land shall be married. For as a young man marries a young woman, so shall your builder marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.

A change of name in scripture denotes a new relationship between God and God's people just as a change of name denotes a change of relationship in marriage.

Drink up of that delicious wine. Be prepared because a change is coming in our relationship with God. Be ready to witness God's delight in us.