

Worship Service - "*Celebrate?*"

Epiphany 2, Year C,

16th January, 2022

1 Corinthians 12:1-11 CEV / John 2:1-11 CEV

Intro/Prelude

[You Are My All In All](#)

music by Dennis Jernigan, played by Annie Center,
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Call to Worship

God's steadfast love extends to the heavens, God's faithfulness to the clouds. With God is the fountain of life, In God's light, we see light. May God's steadfast love be with us, May we draw closer to God. In this time of worship, May we seek the presence of Christ together.

I'm glad to welcome you to online worship with Olympic View Community Church. We seek to welcome all of God's children to join us in bearing witness to the radically transforming power of God's love.

As we gather today, let's reflect on how we share the joy and peace of Christ with each other when we meet in person, and how we might find that joy and share it with others this week.

Reflection Video

[Forever](#)

music by Chris Tomlin, played by Annie Center,
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Invocation

Gift-giver, you call us together, with our different gifts, our different ideas, our different tastes.

You call us together, to share what makes us special, to build each other up, to serve each other in love.

You call us together, knowing that we need all parts of the body if we are to be whole.

You call us together, to sing, to pray, to listen, to speak. To be refreshed so that we can go out and serve. You call us together in the name of the One who taught his friends to pray saying:

"Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, On earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread

And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from sin. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, Forever and ever, Amen.”

We light a candle today to represent the Spirit burning within us, and among us, guiding our time together. (light candle) Amen.

In our reading from 1 Corinthians, Paul reminds us of the gracious gifts each of us has given as members of one body. As we listen to these words, let’s reflect on the many gifts God has given us, and how we can use those gifts together to celebrate the faith that brings us joy.

Epistle Reading 1 Corinthians 12:1-11 CEV

My friends, you asked me about spiritual gifts.

I want you to remember that before you became followers of the Lord, you were led in all the wrong ways by idols that cannot even talk.

Now I want you to know that if you are led by God’s Spirit, you will say that Jesus is Lord, and you will never curse Jesus.

There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but they all come from the same Spirit.

There are different ways to serve the same Lord, and we can each do different things. Yet the same God works in all of us and helps us in everything we do.

The Spirit has given each of us a special way of serving others.

Some of us can speak with wisdom, while others can speak with knowledge, but these gifts come from the same Spirit.

To others the Spirit has given great faith or the power to heal the sick or the power to work mighty miracles. Some of us are prophets, and some of us recognize when God’s Spirit is present. Others can speak different kinds of languages, and still others can tell what these languages mean.

But it is the Spirit who does all this and decides which gifts to give to each of us.

Scripture Video 1 Corinthians 12:1-11 **[A Variety Of Gifts But One Spirit](#)**

Lectioary bible reading

A Time of Prayer

Today we come together as a community to share together our joys and concerns, and lift them to God in prayer. If you would like to share a specific request to be included in our communal prayer time, please leave a comment in the video below, or email myself at: vicarglenn@gmail.com, and I'll make sure to include that request in next week's service, as well as send a prayer chain email, if you would like.

Joys and Concerns

Today, we can take joy in the fact that Roger and Kathy's granddaughter Amber responded to antibiotics and was released from the hospital. We continue to pray for her continued healing in all aspects of her life.

Let's also keep Angela Zimmerman in our prayers as she works through a rough patch.

We also can lift up thanks for Myrna's continued improvement recovering from a bug that she had over the holidays.

Finally, let's remember Robert Oberg and family this week as there was a case of COVID in his setting, and they are now on lockdown for two weeks and unable to have regular visitation.

Let's take these prayers and others in our hearts to God together in prayer.

Pastoral Prayer

Long-awaited Jesus, bring us rest for our weary hearts, bring us peace for our troubled minds, and bring us joy at seeing your face.

We anticipate the wedding feast, the celebration of your presence and our connection forever with you.

When our lives run dry, we rest in the hope that you will replenish us.

We await the hour when you come and reinvent the world.

With patience at times and sometimes without it, we plead with you to transform our lives and provide what we can never provide for ourselves.

We trust you to take the emptiness of religion and fill us with the richness of new creation in you. We submit ourselves to your transforming power and your wisdom to make us into our true selves, the people you made us to be.

With joy, we praise you for your wonderful power and grace, coming once to give us what we needed and coming again to make all things complete.

We place our trust in you. Help us also to believe in the glory you have revealed as we look expectantly toward the fullness of the future you bring.

Come, Lord Jesus. Amen.

In our gospel lesson this morning, we are told the familiar story of Jesus turning the water into wine. As we listen to these words from John, let's reflect on what that event means, not only for those present, but for how we should live our own faith today.

Gospel Lesson John 2:1-11 CEV

Three days later Mary, the mother of Jesus, was at a wedding feast in the village of Cana in Galilee.

Jesus and his disciples had also been invited and were there.

When the wine was all gone, Mary said to Jesus, "They don't have any more wine."

Jesus replied, "Mother, my time hasn't yet come: You must not tell me what to do."

Mary then said to the servants, "Do whatever Jesus tells you to do."

At the feast there were six stone water jars that were used by the people for washing themselves in the way that their religion said they must. Each jar held about twenty or thirty gallons.

Jesus told the servants to fill them to the top with water. Then after the jars had been filled,

he said, "Now take some water and give it to the man in charge of the feast."

The servants did as Jesus told them,

and the man in charge drank some of the water that had now turned into wine. He did not know where the wine had come from, but the servants did. He called the bridegroom over

and said, "The best wine is always served first. Then after the guests have had plenty, the other wine is served. But you have kept the best until last!"

This was Jesus' first miracle, and he did it in the village of Cana in Galilee. There Jesus showed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.

Scripture Video John 2:1-11 [The Wedding At Cana](#)

Lectionary bible reading

Reflection - “Celebrate?”

What? We're not having a party today? Not exactly what you think of when you think of weekly worship, is it? But I would ask, why don't we celebrate? Why is our mood not festive when we gather together as the body of Christ every week?

Our tradition and faith history certainly present us with a long-standing example of what proper worship should be. A very somber, meditative experience filled with age-old rituals designed to make our time together serious and sober, full of formality and respectful silence. There can be value in having times of quiet reflection, creating a sense of the holy in the midst of a busy, noisy life. But in making that the central focus of our time together, we lose that sense of joy and celebration that being believers should also generate in us as well.

Historically, worship was not always so serious. In the early church, as evidenced in Luke's writing in Acts and Paul's letters, particularly to the Corinthians, there was more of a festive, communal atmosphere when the community gathered. They didn't sit formally in pews in an ornate sanctuary. They met in people's homes, around food and wine, most likely with lively conversation and socializing. They were emulating Jesus in how they gathered and worshiped. Certainly there are times in the gospels where Jesus preached to a large crowd, and in the synagogues. But most of his ministry was spent in social settings, in people's homes, talking and debating over dinner, probably into the early hours of the morning, and probably over many glasses of wine and good food. His was a very social-oriented ministry. Yet over time our worship has largely lost that sense of joy in community, that sense of exuberance. With the focus on serious reverence we've also made worship a place for carrying in the frustration that we feel outside the gathered community, a place to express our concerns. As a prophetic preacher, I'm very guilty of this. Often we feel frustrated that God seems to sit back and let so much bad happen in the world, and we use our time at worship to seek understanding and solace from that frustration, and think about how we can be God's apostles in the here and now to make up the gap we perceive in divine action.

In our gospel story this morning, there is a sense of that divine hesitancy in Jesus' reluctance to step in and solve the problem at hand. In fact, he seems somewhat harsh in his response to the situation. When his mother makes him aware that the wine has run out, he wants to know why that's his problem. He pretty much says this is not the time for him to make a difference. This sense of hesitancy, of nothing before its time, is emphasized in John's gospel. There's even a term for it, theodicy, trying to justify God's goodness in the face of suffering and evil in the world. I doubt there's any of us who haven't wondered why does God let bad things happen to good people; why doesn't God step in and make a difference, particularly during a global pandemic when so many are dying.

Our story today may seem like a trivial example; what impact will this really have in the greater scheme of things if the week-long wedding celebration peters out early?

Actually, bigger than one would think. In an honor and reputation-based society, if they proved to be less than adequate hosts, they would be the focus of ridicule for years to come, and they would not be trusted to follow through in any transaction, business or otherwise. They would not be trustworthy. So it wasn't a small thing, yet why this example of a party in jeopardy as Jesus' first miracle, his incarnational coming out as it were?

Because it's an example in microcosm of this issue of theodicy, of divine reluctance to step in and make a difference. Yet just as important is Mary's part in this story. She doesn't just drop it when Jesus tries to brush her off. She doesn't let it go. She calls the servants over and tells them to do as he says, anticipating that he will change his mind and act.

We tend to think that God's will is set and absolute, that we have no part in divine will and action. Yet over and over again in the biblical narrative, God does change and act when people continue to tug at God's sleeve as Mary tugged at Jesus. God's people cried out and God heard them in Egypt. The king of Nineveh changed his ways and God changed his mind, much to Jonah's chagrin. When the Israelites made a golden calf to worship, Moses' pleas for clemency led God to change his plans to destroy the entire nation. These are just a few examples.

Theologian John Roth observes that, "if God's power is bound only by God's un-necessitated will... then God's ways can change. Moreover, if the biblical narratives can be trusted...God's activities do form changed ways from time to time." This somewhat troubling text invites us to trust so much in God's generosity and abundance that we, like the perceptive mother of Jesus, nudge God with our observation: they have no wine. We seek God's action in prayers of petition, seeking to nudge God into action.

The promise of this story is that God does move to action, and action in overflowing abundance, as the overflowing jars of wine illustrate. Yet sadly, we as the church seem to forget that our Lord once attended a wedding feast, and was moved to say yes to gladness and joy, to celebration. Jesus turned water into wine, not only to save the reputation of his hosts, but also to point to a God who takes joy in the laughter and celebration of God's people.

James McBride Dabbs, an author and Presbyterian elder, remembers religion as the opposite of life in rural South Carolina. He says, "Religion was a day and a place: religion was Sunday and the church: almost everything else was life. Religion was a curious, quiet, and inconsequential moment in the vital existence of a country boy. It came around every week, but it didn't have much to do with the rest of life, that is, with life."

This sign at Cana tells us that Jesus served a God whose mind can be changed to provide joy in life, who thinks it is worth a miracle to allow people to celebrate the blessings God's created life provide.

God does not want our religion to be too holy for us to be happy in. We often forget

that throughout his life and ministry, Jesus celebrated people: people getting married, people being healed and made whole, people enjoying meals together. He carried a spirit of celebration with him wherever he went because he proclaimed a God of mercy and peace and joy. That's what made his message so relevant and attractive to the crowds. Life was not meant to be joyless and dour. It wasn't about stressing over following endless rules but living just lives that enabled all to have joy and celebration. This joyous feast at Cana should be a sign to us, as the church, that we are to rejoice in the people of God and to lift our glasses to toast the world with the amazing good news of the grace of God for all.

David Steele, a Christian pastor and author, not to be confused with the David Steele who is our church's General Secretary, refers to this celebratory spirit as "Cana-Grace." He defines that as the "knack for throwing parties that combine food, decorations, music, and laughter to create an atmosphere of welcome, well-being, and love." He even coined his own beatitude: "Blessed is the pastor whose church has a real tenor or plumber. But doubly blessed is the pastor whose congregation knows Cana-Grace." Theologian Robert Hotchkins adds, "Christians ought to be celebrating constantly.

We ought to be preoccupied with parties, banquets, feasts, and merriment. We ought to give ourselves over to veritable orgies of joy because we have been liberated from the fear of life and the fear of death. We ought to attract people to the church quite literally by the fun there is in being a Christian." Cana-Grace, what a way for Jesus to start his ministry in John's Gospel. It was worth a miracle because it manifests the glory of God, the very God who wants even now for the community of faith to be a celebration of people, of the blessings of God's creation and God's grace: people joining in festive conversation and laughter around a potluck; playing games and horsing around in the fellowship hall; even dare I say it, singing and dancing in the sanctuary.

In our reading from Corinthians this morning, Paul talks about the importance of the individual gifts we are given to the overall health of the body, to the common good. I would argue that one of the most important is those who are good at Cana-Grace, at planning and executing celebrations of the joy that our Christian faith should exude. Those who are masters at creating a sense of comfort and joy at the arrival of new faces among us. Those whose talents make gatherings a time of laughter and enjoyment, times when the hours pass by unnoticed.

They are the unsung heroes whose talents may be more important for the spiritual health of the body than a hundred of your pastor's riveting sermons. Which leads me to invite you to ponder a few questions for consideration in the coming week. Are we a people of Cana-Grace? Do people feel the joy of being a follower of Christ when they meet us? How can we make our gatherings, including worship, more the celebrations they should be? These aren't just hypothetical questions. I would hope you would be willing to share your thoughts on what we can do to be the place people seek out for the joy and excitement they feel here, the raw energy that is contagious. And if we lack that joy, how do we reignite that fire in our bellies that can't be

contained? May God's Spirit speak to and guide us to be the congregation of Cana Grace in this community. Amen.

A Call to Serve

Brothers and sisters, who we are, and yet becoming as individuals shows God's presence in the world. That divine presence is reflected even more fully, powerfully, and transformatively as we unite in Beloved Community. Let us bring ourselves, our gifts, and our resources together that God may be glorified.

As we continue to seek to be a place of compassion and support to our community, we ask that you give prayerful consideration as to how you may support our efforts. If you would like to make a donation, gifts can still be mailed to our church office, or online donations can be made through the link in the video description. Thanks again for all your support, and may we continue to work together to keep being a place of ministry that seeks to promote the growth of God's shalom around us. Today, as we listen to the following jazzy song by Derick Thomas, let's reflect on how we celebrate our faith, and how we might use our gifts and talents to inspire others to do the same.

A Time for Reflection

Reflection on the Word [Video]

[Celebrate](#)

written and performed by Derick Thomas, Provided to YouTube by Syntax Creative, from the Peace on Earth album, released on 11/3/2014 by Sound of the House LTD, used and reported under CCLI Streaming License 20271246

The Prayer of Thanksgiving

O God, we commit to use all our gifts --wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, working of miracles, prophecy, discernment, tongues, administration, hospitality, and finances--in the service of acting as co-workers with you and each other for *peace and justice to flow like a mighty stream.*

BENEDICTION

Go now from this place, remembering that the God who calls us to mission also calls us to feasting and dancing.

May the one who turned water into wine turn our tedium into festival, and show us how to alternate between commitment and carnival.

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.

As we extinguish this candle, let's carry it's divine spark into our own lives this week, shining God's light into the lives of all we encounter. Amen.

Postlude [*God of Wonders*](#)

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