

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday OT, C

**“When the wine ran short, the mother of Jesus said to him, ‘They have no wine.’”**

I wonder if that’s how we sometimes expect Jesus to act in our lives. There is a problem to be fixed. **“They have no wine.”** We tell Jesus. And, somehow, he makes more so the party can continue as before. But is that enough? Is all we want just a refill? Do we want to fix the problem and go on with the same old life in the same old way?

Here is my confession. Sometimes that’s exactly what I want. I just want the problem to be fixed and go away so I can get on with my life.

I suspect we all, at some point in our lives, just want some magic. We want Jesus to show up, wave the divine wand, and make it all better.

They have no wine, abracadabra, now they do. But that’s not who Jesus is and that’s not what the gospel or Christianity are about.

In some way, magic spares us from God and life. It keeps us from encountering the new, the possible, the unforeseen. It entertains but it doesn’t transform or change life. A magical reading of today’s gospel leaves us wondering if it happened. What is his next trick? How did he do that? And if we are honest with ourselves, we know better. Water does not turn into wine. Have you ever seen that happen? Have you ever done it? No, you have not and neither have I. And it is not because we are not Jesus but because there is no magic, only magical illusions.

Today's gospel asks us to move from magical thinking about our lives to looking for and seeing the miraculous. And the question behind every miracle story is this. What does it mean for us? What possibilities does this story raise for our lives and the world?

I don't know if Jesus literally and physically turned water into wine. But then I don't think that is the point of today's gospel. I don't think this gospel is ultimately about turning water into wine. It is about more than that. It is about calling forth life where there is none. It is about transformation. It is about living a new life. The text itself gives us two hints that suggest this.

First, the story happens **“on the third day.”** What does that make you think of? What happens on the third day? Resurrection, a new life, a new beginning, a rebirth. The second hint is, **“There was a wedding.”** Again, this is about a new life: two people coming together to create and live a new life, to change and be changed by each other, and to open themselves to unknown possibilities and an unforeseen future.

All that makes me wonder; maybe running out of wine is not a problem to be fixed, but the beginning of something new. Maybe it is a calling into a new life or an invitation into more life. Nobody likes to run out of wine, but maybe it is necessary for our growth and maturity. And that can be difficult, unsettling, and sometimes painful.

I am not talking about times when we must decide whether we will see the glass as half empty or half full. I am talking about those times in

life when the glass is dry, the bottle is on its side, the party is over, and we are dying of thirst.

And who here doesn't know what that's like? We have all been there. We ran out of wine. Our life is empty, colorless, and tasteless. Nothing is growing or fermenting in us. Or maybe we still have wine, but it has turned to vinegar, and we can no longer stand to drink what is in our cup.

When has the wine run out for you? What parts of your life are dry and empty today? In what ways has life become bitter or colorless and tasteless? This isn't only about us, however. We can see and name other people who **“have no wine”** and places in which **“the wine gave out.”**

It is happening in our lives, our institutions, our country, and our world.

I am not talking about Cabernet or Chardonnay. I am talking about the wine of love, intimacy, and friendship; the wine of meaning, purpose, and direction; the wine of vitality, passion, and enthusiasm; the wine of youth, strength, and health; the wine of belief, trust, and faith; the wine of mercy and forgiveness, the wine of peace, joy, and security; the wine of justice, dignity, and equality; the wine of hospitality, inclusion, and welcome; the wine of truth, certainty, and answers.

When the wine gives out life is dying on the vine, and we are no longer intoxicated by the Holy Spirit. We may not have said it in the

same way, but we have all repeated Mary's words for ourselves, for another, for the world. **“They have no wine.”**

I have said those words to Jesus, have not you? Every prayer of petition is telling Jesus about where the wine has run out. And often we tell Jesus exactly what kind of wine we need, a nice cabernet, not too dry, with a hint of berries and chocolate. Mary, however, doesn't do that.

Mary does not set out any expectations. She doesn't tell Jesus what to do. She offers no suggestions about the wine they need. She just names reality. She lets the reality of the situation call to and invites Jesus to respond.

Mary is simply holding open the door for something to happen, the door to a new possibility, the door to a new life, the door of hope. Is not that really what we are doing every time we pray? We are holding open the door to our life, another's life, the life of the world, and hoping Jesus will walk through, hoping he will show up and do something.

And here is the hard part about life when the wine gives out: Jesus just might show up and do something, or he might not. There is no certainty about what will happen, no guarantees. You know that as well as I do. We have all offered our prayers. Sometimes they get answered like we want, and sometimes they don't. And sometimes it is something we never could have imagined. Other times it is different from what we wanted, and maybe we don't even want what shows up. There is a reason for that saying, **“Be careful what you pray for.”**

I cannot make you any promises about what will happen when the wine of your life runs out. I have no definite answers. But I know we have a part to play in the possibility of this miracle. Jesus did not do this by himself. Mary declared the need, the emptiness, **“They have no wine.”** The servants poured the water. The head waiter tasted, recognized, and named the good wine, the new life. Those are our parts too. We play those parts for ourselves, each other, and the world.

Sometimes we need to be Mary and name the empty and dry places even when we don’t know how they will be filled up. **“Lord, they have no food, no justice, no security.”** **“Lord, I have no vision or direction for my life.”** **“Lord, they have no health, no money, no safety.”** **“Lord, they have no wine.”** Sometimes we need to be the ones to carry and pour water even when we cannot see that it is making a difference. Sometimes we need to be the head waiter naming and recognizing new life, helping others taste the new wine.

When the wine runs out Jesus needs us as much as we need him. I want to play my part even if I don’t know how it will all turn out. Don’t you? Is not that ultimately what faith and hope are about?

**My Dear Brothers and Sisters,**

Opening the door to Jesus is always a risk. We invite a response not knowing and having no control over what the response will be, or if there will even be one. We are gambling that God is just as faithful and hopeful as we are, and hopefully more so. We are risking that the future

to come is worth more and that the coming life is larger and better than the empty glasses and bottles that litter our lives. **Amen.**