

Gaines Congregational United Church of Christ

January 19, 2025

Old Testament Reading; Isaiah 62: 1-5

Responsive Reading: Psalm 36: 5-10

Epistle Reading; 1 Corinthians 12: 1-11

Gospel Reading: John 2: 1-11

Sermon: The Servants Knew

By Rev. Jim Gardner

Summary: Others may think that you are crazy, but the truth is; if we see it, or hear it, or feel it, then we know it. WE KNOW IT!

Our gospel message today is the story of Jesus at the wedding in Cana. Some scholars like to question this account. They seem to feel that the wedding was a showy thing and a vain display of just how great those that were involved thought themselves to be. They argue that changing water to wine was somehow immoral and that Jesus should not reward bad planning.

Phooey!

Jesus came to this world to interact with life as it existed. A wedding was a big event. It took a lot of planning and participation at several levels.

Protocol included “seating” family with family, honored guests in a place of honor and “seating” the rest of those invited. Food had to be prepared and food and drink served in the proper sequence. The wedding planner makes known to whoever is financing the event what is needed and how much of it to have on hand. Then he trusts them to do their part. Guests had to be made welcome and feet had to be washed. Of all in attendance the servants were the lowliest and the most important in the logistics of the event.

When I do a wedding, I so appreciate a wedding planner. If there is no wedding planner people expect the minister to know everything and coordinate it to the satisfaction of everyone involved. I would much rather just stand where I am told and only give advice on the words of the ceremony.

Now to the wedding. It is the mother of Jesus that recognizes the wine is running low. Jesus is the Son of God but also the son of Mary and in those days as it is true to this day, Mother Knows Best! After he tells her that his time has not yet come, she seemingly ignores him and tells the servants to do what ever Jesus tells them. Suffice it to say that they do just that.

When they present the water, now wine, to the master of the feast he recognizes it to be superior wine but does not know where it came from. The guy in charge of everything does not know where the wine came from but the lowliest people at the

wedding knew. “But the servants who had drawn the water knew.”

Today we Christians, are the servants but we are more than that.

Jesus said of his servants, “I no longer call you servants because servants do not know what their master is doing but I call you friends because I have made known to you what I am doing. Later they are elevated to an even higher level when God says, “ Those who know me are called the children of God and if children of God then Heirs with Jesus to the kingdom of heaven.”

OK, wrap your mind around that. Because we are servants of God, we are also heirs with Christ to the kingdom of God.

At the wedding the servants knew that the water became wine because they were the servants.

We are made part of the will of God because we are his servants, and his friends, and therefore his children.

At the wedding the servants SAW the water made wine.

If we see it, or hear it, or feel it, then we know it. It does not matter what non-believers think, we know it.

Non-believers will never know it even if they see it.

When I was driving truck, I used to wear my clerical collar.

One day I delivered at a business that was one of our trucking accounts main customers. The scale master saw me and said; “Can I talk to you.” He then went on to say, “I am not into that religion thing but I know that you are and I have a problem. My son is showing the signs of an impending heart attack. He had one a few years ago and I am scared.”

I took his hands and I prayed that God not heal him as such, but make this incident to be a false alarm so there would not be a lingering effect of fear of another reoccurrence.

He thanked me and I left not to see him again for about three weeks. When I did see him again, I asked him about his son. He said, “Oh, no big deal. We did not need prayer. There was nothing wrong with him, he was just having an anxiety attack.”

I expressed my relief and left. Then I tried to remember exactly what my prayer had been. It was then that I realized that God had answered my prayer word for word.

This does not usually happen to me. God always answers my prayers but seldom with exactly what I asked for.

I am a servant of God. I knew where the wine came from. I knew that the diagnosis of an anxiety attack came directly from God, but, the non-believer thought that the diagnosis proved the prayer never needed praying.

As servants of God we know where the wine comes from. When we see a beautiful Sunrise or Sunset we know where the wine came from. When we hear a bird sing or an especially beautiful rendition of a hymn or the Star-Spangled Banner, we know where the wine came from. When we hold our new born baby or grandbaby in our arms we know where the wine came from.

This brings us to the Epistle lesson. The Epistle says that we are all given different gifts from the same spirit. I work in an end of life house in Batavia. I see volunteers make the residents feel special and even joyous sometimes as their physical death draws nearer. That is a gift from God.

Here at Gaines, I see Danny lift up prayers for people he does not even know every Sunday and at the Manor House a small prayer circle joins together to collectively lift prayers for the family, community and nation 5 days a week. That is a gift from God. Here at Gaines, we have a Bible class which openly studies the various interpretations of Bible scholars taught by a Bible scholar and at the Manor House we have a student of the Bible buying Bibles and devotionals for the residents. That is a gift from God. Here at Gaines, we have a treasurer and a head of the trustees that keep the doors open and the grounds safe and warm and at the Manor House we have staff members who

come in a moment's notice to help out in an emergency and work at jobs out of their job description. That is a gift from God.

I see other members Facebooking messages of love and encouragement to not only our members but to anyone that sees their posts. These are all gifts from God. This is the wine drawn from the water pots and we the servants of God know where it came from.

And in this message, you see me doing something that I do again and again in my sermons. You see me encouraging you to use the gifts that God has given you to distribute his wine to his world. If you wonder why I insist on doing this you might look at our Old Testament lesson from Isaiah; "For Zion's sake I will not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burns. The Gentiles shall see your righteousness, and all kings your glory."

Your "gifts" are the wine from God and if you do not distribute them the whole world will die of thirst.

We are servants and friends and children of God, and God is counting on us to live up to the family name.

Hallelujah and Amen!

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