

2 Epiphany  
Isaiah 62:1-5  
Psalm 36:5-10  
1 Corinthians 12:1-11  
John 2:1-11

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*May God's word be spoken, May God's Word be heard, and May that point us to the living Word who is Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

There is a scene in the science fiction novel *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* in which the two main characters, Ford Prefect and Arthur Dent are standing on Lord's Cricket Ground in England. And Ford takes this opportunity to teach Arthur about what an “SEP” is. An SEP is “Somebody Else's Problem.” As Ford describes it, “An SEP is something we can't see, or don't see, or our brain doesn't let us see, because we think that it's somebody else's problem.... The brain just edits it out, it's like a blind spot. If you look at it directly you won't see it unless you know precisely what it is. Your only hope is to catch it by surprise out of the corner of your eye.” And an SEP is capable of preventing one from seeing all kinds of things. In Arthur's case, there is a whole spaceship on Lord's Cricket Ground that looks like an upended Italian Bistro, but no one can see it because it is an SEP!

Interestingly, this morning's Gospel lesson from John is a story of an SEP. Jesus is at a wedding celebration, and the host runs out of wine. His mother, Mary, informs of this fact, by telling him, “They have no wine.”

This indicates that Mary knows quite well that Jesus has the ability to solve this problem for the host. But Jesus replies, "Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come." Jesus is telling Mary that the lack of wine is an SEP – it is Somebody Else's Problem! They both know he has the ability to solve this problem, but is interesting to see his reticence to do so. Perhaps he just does not think it necessary to use his gifts to deal with the SEP. It is after all Somebody Else's Problem! It doesn't seem to have anything to do with him. Why should he use his gifts for the simple task of providing more wine. It might be that Jesus was hoping for a bigger more dramatic moment in which to reveal himself to the world. And it may also be that he was little hesitant to share his gifts to the world – maybe he was unsure he'd actually be able to come through. Maybe he hadn't learned to trust his gifts yet or he was wary of the attention he might receive?

While we do see his reticence, it is important to note that the story does not end there. Jesus does not let it remain an SEP, with encouragement, and perhaps a little bit of a push, from Mary, his mother, he goes on to share his gifts and to provide the best wine for the party.

It is at this point in the story, you may be thinking why this moment?

Why DOES Jesus choose for his first miracle, the first sign that he is the Son of God to be saving a party. Did they really need more wine? But to focus on the issue of the wine is to miss the point of the story. The point of the story is the revealing of Jesus as the Christ, as God's Son, the Messiah, the Savior of the World. And it is not entirely insignificant that he did this first sign at a wedding feast. It affirms the joy and holiness of marriage, and his sign reminds us that the ordinary can be holy. In sharing his gifts, Jesus made an ordinary event into something extraordinary. He showed us that the glory of God shines forth in the midst of the normalcy of human life.

Jesus made a tangible difference in the lives of many that evening. Turning water into wine may seem like a small thing in comparison with the other miracle stories we read of the healings or the feeding of the five thousand, but is not insignificant because through that miracle, people came to believe. The point of the story is that Jesus “revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.” His action meant that people began to believe in him, to follow him. And as Christians, we know that following Christ is a transformative experience. Our lives have been changed because we have chosen to follow Jesus as our Lord and Savior.

The good news, of course, is that we know that the transformative power of God is not limited to the past, to stories we read – it is alive in the here and now. Lives are transformed when gifts are shared – and that includes our gifts too!

While I don't think any of us have the ability to turn water into wine – although if you do, please speak to the Altar Guild, because I am sure they would love to have you! we do have gifts to share. We have talents and resources that can make a difference in the lives of others. I firmly believe that each and every one of you have gifts to share. I have seen many of those gifts in action, and I know they do a great deal to transform the lives of those in this community, and those beyond these walls. The outpouring of prayers and support for our friends in Haiti in the midst of their devastation this week is only ne example of that.

But we often hold back from sharing our gifts. Particularly when the situation looks like an SEP. We will likely ignore the problem. We will just assume that it is for someone else to fix, even if we have the skills or the resources to make a difference. But even if it is truly an SEP, truly Somebody Else's Problem, we can still offer to help. Jesus did. He didn't

HAVE TO turn water into wine, but he had the gifts to help solve the host's problem, and so he did.

So, when we see situations that could be helped by our gifts, let us not hold back. Even if like Jesus, we may be unsure where or how to use our gifts. Even if we may be nervous about what will happen when we actually put ourselves out there. We might be in need of a little encouragement, we might need a “Mary” to trust in us and in our gifts, so that we have the courage to step forth and offer them!

Yet what this morning's Gospel lesson shows us is the tremendous good that can come when gifts are shared: LIVES ARE CHANGED. May the story of Jesus turning water into wine be in an inspiration to us, to share our gifts where they are needed! And may Mary's role in the story remind us to encourage each other to share our gifts and may we remind each other how lives can be transformed when we do.

AMEN.