

Extravagant Sign

John 2:1-11

Jesus is making his public debut as the Son of God, performing the first of seven recorded miracles in John's gospel — turning 120 gallons of water into wine at a wedding in Cana of Galilee.

Now it wasn't the place or the time that Jesus had intended to display his divinity, but when your mother asks you to do something, as Mary did, you do it.

Mary's insistence for Jesus to intervene was out of concern for their hosts, as running out of wine was a great embarrassment. It was expected for food and drink to be abundant for the many days of wedding feasting. (Weddings in Jesus' time weren't just a sit-down dinner or a morning brunch. They went on for days.)

John's telling of this miracle, though, is not about saving face — or even just revealing the face of God in Jesus.

There's a life-changing lesson for us today that is swishing around the six stone jars of water that are on the premises of the wedding banquet.

To start, John's point of telling us there are six jars is important. Numbers have great significance in Jewish teachings. Seven, for example, represents perfection and completeness. Six, however, symbolizes imperfection. Jesus viewing those six jars as valuable for this miracle moment shows us how God sees all the things we deem unworthy as worthy.

There's more. The water in those jars were not meant for drinking, but rather for ceremonial washing. It was customary for Jews to wash their hands and say a blessing before any meal that included bread. It would be considered disgusting to drink from those six jars.

Jesus, though, does the unthinkable. He disregards Jewish beliefs and traditions, turning the untouchable water into the best wine anyone has ever tasted. Had the guests known the water for ceremonial washing was used for the wine they were sipping; they would have been aghast. Yet those privy to this miracle were getting preview of what Jesus' mission would be: To dismantle the systems that separate the clean from the unclean, that keep the downtrodden down and the oppressed oppressed.

Would we have sipped that wine if we knew we it came from? Would we be willing to bend rules, break traditions, rid ourselves of rituals if it meant experiencing amazing water-into-wine miracles that God has for us?

There's so much God wants to do in our lives, but first we need to let go of our assumptions of how life should be. Are you ready for a boundary-breaking, rule-busting God to turn your water into wine?

God, forgive us for those times we are so set in our ways that we close our hearts to the new thing You want to do in our lives. Open us this day to all the beautiful and exciting possibilities. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.



St. John's United Church of Christ

P.O. Box 794, 401 N Main Street, Belvidere, IL 61008

Sunday Christian Education 9am Worship 10:30
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WELCOME VISITORS! Thank you for coming! Please sign a pew card to place in the offering plate.

WORSHIP: When reading this bulletin Leader Speaks Plain Font, **Everyone Speak Bold Font**
Everyone is invited to join us in Communion.

Nursery: Children are welcome in all aspects of worship. The nursery provides an alternative space so kids and parents can both get what they need from worship. Children are encouraged to check in with their adult before going downstairs with the nursery attendant.

You Are Not Alone

The following support groups meet regularly at St. John's

- The Belvidere Group (AA) meets at everyday at 7pm. Women's Group meets Mondays 5:30pm
- T.O.P.S. Mondays 11am



Delicious Fundraiser



Amazon List



T-Shirts

Announcements

- ✚ **Today and every 3rd Sunday of the month**, St. John's leads services at **Heritage Woods** at 3 pm. Join after their service for time to socialize with the residents and meet some great people.
- ✚ **Soup or Bowl and Scout Sunday** February 9th
- ✚ **St. John's Annual Meeting** February 16th
- ✚ **Community Meal** every third Wednesday of the month from 5p-6p!
- ✚ **Blessing Box** The weather has turned cold, so we must fill our box accordingly. No canned foods or anything that may contain water. Containers can freeze and explode or worse freeze and thaw without anyone knowing and go bad. These can make people sick. **Cans will be thrown away.** Let's work together to make sure only safe food goes to our neighbors. If you want to make canned donations, you can bring things *INSIDE* the church and we will get them to Food pantries or people in need.
- ✚ **Paper Angel Closet** needs toilet paper, paper towels, Kleenex, toothpaste, bleach, shampoo, and dish soap.
- ✚ **Menards Ministry:** If you have unused Menards rebates, or even receipts. We use these rebates for projects around the church.
- ✚ **Open Door Fundraiser:** We are still collecting money to upgrade our parking lot doors. Our goal is to collect enough money to automate the doors and make it a double entry to hold the temperature in the office area.



St. John's Calendar

Hymn "The Spirit Sends us Forth to Serve"
(Tune: O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing)

**The Spirit sends us forth to serve;
we go in Jesus' name
To bring glad tidings to the poor,
God's favor to proclaim.**

**We go to comfort those who mourn
and set the burdened free;
Where hope is dim,
to share a dream and help the blind to see.**

**We go to be the hands of Christ,
to scatter joy like seed
and, all our days, to cherish life,
to do the loving deed.**

**Then let us go to serve in peace,
the gospel to proclaim.
God's Spirit has empowered us;
we go in Jesus' name.**

Text: Delores Dufner, 1993

Benediction

Postlude

Fill, Draw, Taste: Service Prayers for the Second Sunday after Epiphany was written by the Rev. Dr. Cheryl A. Lindsay, Minister for Worship and Theology for the United Church of Christ.

Cover art: **Altar of Keur Moussa Abbey** Saget, Father George
Record number: [58805] Shared by Vanderbilt University Digital Library

Prelude

Announcements

Choral Introit "We are Called" (verse 1 & chorus)

Come! Live in the light!
Shine with the joy and the love of the Lord!
We are called to be light for the kingdom, to live in
the freedom of the city of God.

We are called to act with justice,
We are called to love tenderly;
We are called to serve one another,
To walk humbly with God.

Responsive Welcome Statement

At St. John's United Church of Christ, we are Living
Outwardly & Valuing Everyone!

We live and work amid God's love!

In that spirit, we extend love to all who come into our
midst, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity,
race, nationality, skin color, culture, differing
abilities, age or political affiliations, to participate fully
in all aspects of church.

**Our ministry is to bring the Good News of
Christ's love to all.**

We work in God's name to tear down walls and build
community,

**to walk with each other through all of life's cir-
cumstances,**

to provide for those in need,

**to offer comfort to the hurting and the sick,
and to uplift the brokenhearted.**

Where we fail, we ask for God's forgiveness.

May the Holy Spirit and our siblings continue to chal-
lenge us to do better.

**No matter who you are or where you are on life's
journey, you are welcome here!**

Call to Worship (Inspired by Psalm 36)

Your steadfast love, O LORD, extends to the heavens, your faithfulness to the clouds.

For with you is the fountain of life. Fill us with life!

Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains; your judgments are like the great deep.

For with you is the fountain of life. Fill us with life!

O continue your steadfast love to those who know you and your salvation to the upright of heart!

For with you is the fountain of life. Fill us with life!

Invocation

Magnificent God, we come to draw near to you. Your presence among us sustains and challenges us. In you, we find strength and surprises. May the songs we sing, the prayers we pray, the word proclaimed, and the lives touched honor your name. We give you glory and honor. We welcome you and pray that your spirit shapes us with fresh wind, power, and compassion. Amen.

Hymn #68 "God is Truly with Us"

The Apostles' Creed: an alternative version #882

Children's Time "Gifts of the Spirit" 1 Corinthians 12

Pastoral Prayer – The Lord's Prayer

Hymn #472 "Precious Lord"

Prayer for Transformation and New Life

Gracious God, we live in the tension between expectation and reality. Sometimes, we navigate that tension with hope and clarity. At other times, we fester in doubt, disappointment, and uncertainty. Help us to release our need to control and

enable us to embrace the possibilities. May our trust in your goodness and the power you have poured into us embolden our faith. Amen.

Words of Grace

Beloved, know that God's grace meets us at our point of need with encouragement. Circumstances change, and that's the nature of God's creative work. Receive the gift of new life with the unexpected experiences it brings. God is with you and equips you for the journey.

Gloria Patri

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.



General Giving

Scripture Isaiah 62:1-5
John 2:1-11

Sermon "Match Made in Heaven"

Invitation to Generosity

Moment for Mission Sri Lanka

Musical Offering

Doxology

**Praise God, through whom all blessings flow,
Praise God, all creatures here below,
Praise God, above ye heavenly host.
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen.**

Prayer of Dedication

Holy One, may our gifts declare your glory and benefit the common good. Receive them with our gratitude for your generosity and the opportunity to participate in your kingdom on earth. Amen.