

Bible Study
Epiphany 2, Year C
January 17, 2016

[RCL] Isaiah 62:1-5; Psalm 36:5-10; 1 Corinthians 12:1-11; John 2:1-11

Isaiah 62:1-5

Like the Psalm appointed for this Sunday, this passage from the prophet Isaiah speaks of God's love and faithfulness. The familiar metaphor of the bride and the bridegroom continues in this passage from the previous chapter. Yet, the full significance of this metaphor somehow gets lost in the context of our 21st century understanding of marriage. Whatever the metaphor, the message is one of God's love and faithfulness is unmistakable.

- Do you feel loved? Vindicated?
- Do you feel that you are God's delight?
- What do "forsaken" and "desolate" mean for us?
- How do we experience God's vindication?
- What might this look like in our own time and place?

Psalm 36:5-10

In this Psalm we hear praises of God's love, faithfulness, righteousness and justice. It celebrates God's protection and how God's people take refuge under the shadow of God's wings. It speaks of God as the source of abundance, light and life.

How often we forget that God is the source of all good things. How hard it is to remember that everything belongs to God, not us. Everything we have is a loving gift from God, for our blessing and enjoyment; the world around us, it's natural resources, food, water, health, our families and our friends. Even our next breath is a gift from God.

In this Psalm, we are called to remember that it is God who is the giver of all of our blessings. The practice of praying the Psalms can help us remember that God is the giver of all abundance, light and life.

- What do you do to remind yourself that God is the giver of your gifts?
- How do you respond when you begin to think of God's blessings as "our" own, the results of our own hard work, our intelligence, or luck?

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

This well-known and beloved passage from Paul's letter to the church in Corinth speaks of the work of the Holy Spirit in the service of the Lord. Paul reminds us of the equal value of our varied spiritual gifts which are given by the Holy Spirit for the common good.

This passage calls us to recognize the gifts of the Spirit that God has provided for our mutual benefit and for the service of the Lord. It calls us to reconsider the roles of the laity, especially, in the works of the church. We often do fail to recognize the spiritual gifts present in our communities. I remember visiting a parish in San Diego a few years ago and being surprised to see a woman with Down Syndrome serving as the acolyte at the 10:15 service. Upon reflection I

realized that she was so perfectly suited to this important ministry and blessed the entire congregation with her love and enthusiasm.

This passage from Corinthians speaks helps us recognize the wonderful variety of gifts that the Holy Spirit provides and call us to recognize and receive these abundant gifts with open minds and open hearts for the common good.

- How do these words inform how we view our own spiritual gifts and those of others?
- How do you address preconceived notions of who and what when it comes to spiritual gifts?
- How do you recognize others spiritual gifts?

John 2:1-11

In this Gospel passage, we hear about Jesus' first miracle, the turning of water into wine. As with the Psalm and the First Testament reading appointed for today, this passage also speaks of God's grace and abundance. What does it say about Jesus that his first miracle is performed at a wedding? What does it mean that when the wine was all gone, Jesus provided more and that it was of the best quality?

The miracle of the changing of water into wine is the first of the seven signs in the Gospel of John that serve to identify Jesus as the Son of God.

- What can we learn about God through the actions of Jesus at the wedding in Cana?
- Are we able to recognize the signs/miracles of God at work in our own lives and in the world around us?
- Do we experience miracles in our own lives?
- Are we able to see the glory of God in our own experiences of the miraculous?
- What water does God change into wine for us?
- What are is the sign we see that causes us to believe?

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