

Message: Scarcity or Abundance?

There are always some people who seem to focus on scarcity instead of abundance. That’s an important theme to keep in mind when you read and reflect on the text for today, John 2:1-11.

There’s a lot to talk about when it comes to Jesus’ first miracle. The apostle John is the only one who records the miracle. John isn’t focused on genealogy or a scholarly examination of what happened.

John is answering one question: “Who is Jesus?”

He’s focused on the character and virtues of Jesus, rather than the time, place or order of things. John wants us to see Jesus in relationship to others. God reveals Jesus’ true nature slowly. It’s like looking at a diamond, one facet at a time, or following bread crumbs on a trail. We can stop and be amazed at any point.

Who is Jesus? John makes it very clear. Jesus is the Lamb of God, sent to save us. We hear God’s voice teaching when Jesus speaks. He has an authority and presence that can’t be ignored. And Jesus has the power to back it up. That’s what the miracles show us.

I’m going to focus on two, key points today: first, the conversation between Mary and Jesus. Second, Jesus’ action and what it means to us, here and now.

Let’s set the scene.... Jesus has traveled from Bethany to the city of Cana, in the middle of Galilee. His family has been invited to a wedding feast, showing great hospitality. In that day, wedding feasts could last for up to seven days. Jesus’ mother is there (this is the first time she’s mentioned in John’s narrative). At some point after Jesus arrives, the wedding coordinator discovers a problem: they’re running out of wine.

The setting is important. Jesus’ first miracle occurs during a wedding. His ministry starts in an intimate, personal, family setting. This tells us how important family is. What better way to show God’s power than through an act of love and generosity when Jesus is gathered with his family and close friends?

God’s Spirit is at work when we’re gathered in intimate settings today as well. God is present in weddings and births – and the days we

celebrate them. God is present when we sit with one another, simply holding hands. God is present when our loved ones die. One of the comments most often made at memorials is “it’s great to see you, even if it’s at such a sad time.” God is with us whenever we gather together with those we love and care for.

Mary hears about the problem and decides to help.

She says to Jesus, “*They’re just about out of wine*” (v3, MSG).

Jesus answers, “*Ma’am, is that any of our business? This isn’t my time*” (v4, MSG).

Mary went ahead anyway, telling the servants,
“*Whatever he tells you, do it*” (v5, MSG).

This is an interesting and important conversation. Mary isn’t asking Jesus to do anything specific. She’s stating the facts: our hosts are almost out of wine. That would be embarrassing. There’s a need.

Jesus says something that seems shocking. The literal translation of Jesus’ response is harsh to our modern ears, “*Woman, what concern is that to you and me?*” (v4, NRSV). The Greek term isn’t translated as “Mom.” It means “Ma’am” or “My lady.”

Jesus isn’t being rude to his mother! He’s reading between the lines. Jesus gets it. His mother is asking him to help, indirectly. And she’s sure he’ll do so, in his own time and his own way. Jesus is reminding her isn’t just her son. He’s one that she – and all of us, have faith in.

Mary is acting like a true disciple. She went to Jesus, stated the need and is completely confident Jesus will do something. That’s a great model for us. Mary trusts Jesus will act and allows him to act in freedom. No second guessing. No begging. No co-dependency.

God’s Spirit empowers Jesus to do remarkable, supernatural acts not to impress us, but so that we might see and believe. That’s the point of miracles: they honor God. They open our eyes to things that are outside of our world view. They show us there’s a spiritual, a supernatural, side to life and creation.

We have to remember: God isn’t there to provide what we want, when we want it. God has a different view of life. What God does or

doesn't do may not always make sense to us, but it's always to bring good out of bad. Paul says it this way, “... *we can be sure that every detail in our lives of love for God is worked into something good*” (Romans 8:28, MSG).

A true disciple trusts God in all things. That doesn't mean that we'll never have any doubts, anxiety or uncertainty. It does mean that we're confident at the end of the day. Things will go as they will. We can rest, assured that God will always do the right thing.

Jesus helps.

The way Jesus acts gives us a sign of who he is. Transmuting the water into wine changes it's nature. Water is a sign of cleansing. Wine comes from the fruit of the vine. Jesus is giving us a sign. He's emphasizing the purpose, the end result. Jesus is making it clear that God's gifts have extraordinary power, even over those things we, as humans, can't change. Jesus meets the need with abundance. Not only is there a lot of wine, it's of the highest quality!

If inanimate materials, like water, can change, how much more can we be cleansed and become fruitful? That's another sign of what it means to be a disciple: we share our relationship with others. When we're in love with God, we can't help ourselves. We want to share it. We want others to have the same love of God. We want others to trust God because they'll know that everything will be okay. That's the power of personal, intimate relationships.

Jesus' first miracle means a lot to us today. Turning water into wine is an act of turning scarcity into abundance. That's the way God's grace moves in our lives. Jesus' simple, practical act was generous and graceful. It was a response to the hospitality of his host, the family that invited him to come. It was a response to the one who asked him to help with simple, confident faith – his mother, whom he loved. It was a mark, making it clear to his new disciples that he was worth their faith and trust.

God gave us a great gift in Jesus' first miracle. This opening to Jesus' ministry shows us that the miraculous, life-giving power of God is at work in our lives, especially in those intimate, daily places of

human life. We don't have to view life from a place of scarcity, timidity or fear.

Let's live lives that are filled with confident faith and trust in God.

That kind of life is lived from a place of abundance, not scarcity.

We use our gifts for others.

That kind of life is marked by generosity, not selfishness.

That kind of life is filled with love and hope, not fear and worry.

How will you live?

Trust God, believe in Jesus and spread the word.

Let us pray ...

God, we thank you for being with us at all times. You showed us that the quiet, intimate moments of life are special, not just for us but to you.

Give us the courage to approach you with confidence, trusting you.

That's what faith is. Help us to live from a place of abundance and generosity toward others, for your grace is always moving through our lives. Most of all, give us the confidence we need to share our love and joy with those who are lonely and lost. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

John 2:1-11 (CEB)

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee. Jesus’ mother was there, and Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the celebration. When the wine ran out, Jesus’ mother said to him, “They don’t have any wine.”

Jesus replied, “Woman, what does that have to do with me? My time hasn’t come yet.”

His mother told the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.” Nearby were six stone water jars used for the Jewish cleansing ritual, each able to hold about twenty or thirty gallons.

Jesus said to the servants, “Fill the jars with water,” and they filled them to the brim. Then he told them, “Now draw some from them and take it to the headwaiter,” and they did. The headwaiter tasted the water that had become wine. He didn’t know where it came from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew.

The headwaiter called the groom and said, “Everyone serves the good wine first. They bring out the second-rate wine only when the guests are drinking freely. You kept the good wine until now.” This was the first miraculous sign that Jesus did in Cana of Galilee. He revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him.