

16 January, 2022 Epiphany 2C Unexpected hospitality

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

CALL TO WORSHIP

People of God As we gather to worship today, we welcome each other, we welcome those visiting with us. More importantly, we consider that God is with us and He welcomes us, generously. God offers us abundant hospitality, an unrestricted invitation, we need only accept. So, come and partake of this goodness.

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

Spirit of abundance, gather with us as we settle into this time of worship and engage with each other and the cloud of witnesses that have gone before us.

Connect us with their stories of faith and encourage us to bring forward our own stories to share the record of your abiding and steadfast love. A Love that will go on and on.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

God of generosity, you set an example of warmth and open-heartedness that we are called to emulate. Forgive us when we are lousy hosts, when we resent giving, when we buy into attitudes that frame those in need as undeserving and ask those requiring assistance and welfare to jump through unreasonable hoops. Forgive us when we are stingy, holding back not only financially but in warmth, concern, and companionship to those who don't look like us or don't share our cultural background. Forgive us when we create illusions of kindness, when we enter into relationships with others that might look impressive on the outside but carry no depth, so that when true friendship is called for, we go missing. Forgive us when we are demanding guests, who assume that all that is on offer in the commonwealth of the earth is meant purely for us and not to be shared, when we take beyond our needs and without considering the needs of all who live alongside us.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

The steadfast love of God extends far and wide, God's mercy and forgiveness are unbounded, when we fail to live with generous hearts we are not condemned and set apart, God remains generous, holding out a welcoming hand to us, we need only grasp it.

The Steadfast Love Of The Lord SOF 549 <https://vimeo.com/481913117>

The steadfast love of the Lord
Never ceases
His mercies they never come
To an end
They are new every morning
They are new everyday

They are new ever morning
Great is Thy faithfulness
O Lord O Lord
Great is the Lord and worthy to be praised

Hillsong Songwriters: Donia Makedonez, John Makedonez

Psalm 36:5-10 Lyn and Children's Talk

Psalm 36:5-10 Contemporary English Version

Your love is faithful, LORD, and even the clouds in the sky can depend on you.

Your decisions are always fair.

They are firm like mountains, deep like the sea, and all people and animals are under your care.

Your love is a treasure, and everyone finds shelter in the shadow of your wings.

You give your guests a feast in your house, and you serve a tasty drink that flows like a river.

The life-giving fountain belongs to you, and your light gives light to each of us.

Our LORD, keep showing love to everyone who knows you, and use your power to save all whose thoughts please you.

Your love, LORD, reaches to the heavens, your faithfulness to the skies.

6 Your righteousness is like the highest mountains, your justice like the great deep. You, LORD, preserve both people and animals.

7 How priceless is your unfailing love, O God! People take refuge in the shadow of your wings.

8 They feast on the abundance of your house; you give them drink from your river of delights.

9 For with you is the fountain of life; in your light, we see light.

10 Continue your love to those who know you, your righteousness to the upright in heart.

This psalm tells us about God's great love for us.

Imagine: Choose some things mentioned in the psalm that you could draw – eg. Mountains, animals, rivers.

Listen: to a lovely song called “**Shine, Jesus, shine**” by Graham Kendrick (you can hear this on you tube)

Think: How can you shine in your family and share God's love with your friends.

Draw: You may like to draw another picture that includes your family and friends.

[Lord, The Light Of Your Love Is Shining](#)

SOF362 x3verses

PRAYER OF ADORATION AND THANKSGIVING

Based on Psalm 36

Speak to all people, to every nation and every clan of God's steadfast love.

Tell them how God's goodness extends from the lands to the heavens, it flows around the earth with the clouds.

God's good judgement is as solid as the mountains and as deep as the ocean,

God is set on saving all creation, everything that dwells on the earth.

God, you gather us up and provide refuge to us, you open your house to us and lay out an abundant feast before us, food to sustain us and a river to quench our thirst.

You are the fountain of our life and in you we see light.

Those who know you, who seek to be people of upright hearts, know that you will continue to love us **and be will always be on hand to offer us salvation and blessing. AMEN**

DISCIPLESHIP THOUGHT

Do 30-year-old men ever concede to the will of their mothers? If so, in what circumstances? What is the sense between the two? Mary is feisty, she doesn't accept Jesus' refusal to intervene and save the wedding hosts from social embarrassment and being renowned for stingy hospitality, she forces him to act. Of all the people at the wedding, she was the one who knew intimately who her son was and what his ministry would become, so why impose this situation on him when he'd said it wasn't his time yet? Why did Jesus end up complying? Had the God-bearer earned the right to be the first to display to the world her grown son's calling? The scripture doesn't answer these questions, but we do hear that after this Jesus' disciples believed in him. **Was witnessing unexpected hospitality and generosity the thing that convinced them? Is this an insight into what our own evangelism could look like?**

OFFERTORY SENTENCE

While a single person cannot open their door and their table to everyone, as a community together we can offer an abundance of hospitality. What we give today is an act of largesse than will travel far and wide.

OFFERTORY

God take these gifts and turn them into kindnesses, turn each kindness into a community of welcome and generosity, turn these communities into a worldwide network of care and compassion, a network that disrupts division and segregation and delivers joy and peace. Amen.

John 2:1-11 Contemporary English Version -

Jesus at a Wedding in Cana

Three days later Mary, the mother of Jesus, was at a wedding feast in the village of Cana in Galilee. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited and were there.

When the wine was all gone, Mary said to Jesus, "They don't have any more wine."

Jesus replied, "Mother, my time hasn't yet come: You must not tell me what to do."

Mary then said to the servants, "Do whatever Jesus tells you to do."

At the feast there were six stone water jars that were used by the people for washing themselves in the way that their religion said they must. Each jar held about twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus told the servants to fill them to the top with water. Then after the jars had been filled, he said, "Now take some water and give it to the man in charge of the feast."

The servants did as Jesus told them, and the man in charge drank some of the water that had now turned into wine. He did not know where the wine had come from, but the servants did. He called the bridegroom over and said, "The best wine is always served first. Then after the guests have had plenty, the other wine is served. But you have kept the best until last!"

This was Jesus' first miracle, and he did it in the village of Cana in Galilee. There Jesus showed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.

Unexpected hospitality. 16th January 2022 Eden Uniting Church,

Paul Dawson

If the scholars are right, this story about Jesus turning water into wine at a wedding feast in Cana, was remembered and written about by John at the end of his long life in about 90 AD. So, John was vividly telling the story of an event that happened over 60 years before.

I think that we have all been encouraged by the faith stories that Marie and Alison and others have shared with us in recent weeks.

And I think in the same way that most of us here could tell a story or two about how we have experienced unexpected hospitality or the kindness of strangers.

One that I can remember happened at the end of 1981 – just over 40 years ago. I had walked for two weeks along the Alpine Track with a friend and we had finished on a high at Mt Feathertop, which even in early summer still had snow patches at the top. It is probably one of the most impressive mountains in Australia and certainly one on which you could easily agree with the psalmist that "the Lord's steadfast love extends to the heavens" and "His righteousness is like the mighty mountains."

The next morning, we descended to the plains and split up hoping to find separate rides as far as we could or at least to the train station at Wangaratta. I had one short ride and then I had to wait a while before deciding that it was best to keep walking along the road. I had probably walked for about an hour in 30 plus degree heat and was feeling a bit dejected when some kind people sitting on a veranda, called out and offered me cold water. I can vividly remember their kindness and how it lifted my spirits. Soon after, another kind person stopped and offered me a ride to Wangaratta and the train.

Thus, I can understand that John would have clearly remembered many of the things that Jesus had said and done so many years before.

In fact, at the end of his gospel, John writes "It is this same disciple who attests what has been written. It is in fact he who wrote it, and we know that his testimony is true. There is much else that Jesus did. If it were all recorded in detail, I suppose the whole world could not hold the books that would be written." So, John would have had many stories to think over before writing his gospel.

The other gospels had been written some 30 years earlier and in the meantime John had had time to think and pray about the meaning of Jesus life, death and resurrection. John (possibly with help) wrote his account to fill in a few gaps in the other gospels – of things he particularly remembered and to reflect more on the spiritual implications of the events.

And so he divided his account into two parts:-

Chapters 1- 12 have been called the book of signs

And chapters 13 -20 the hour of Jesus

Where the other gospel writers described Jesus' deeds as miracles, John chose to call them signs (or indicators)

In the first part – the book of signs, John chose to elaborate on 7 out of the known 36 miracles of Jesus. Only John described the story of the wedding feast at Cana.

So, this was the first sign – pointing to the glory of Jesus and as we heard in the reading, the miracle of turning the water into wine was known or observed not by all at the party - but by the servants who poured the water and wine, Mary, Jesus’ mother, and his disciples.

It was not a magic trick done to impress everyone but naturally an act of love and compassion for the host and the guests - but also a sign to the disciples that Jesus was who he said he was. - - **The son of God.** Or as John wrote “Thus did Jesus reveal his glory and his disciples believed in him”

I think that we ourselves can relate to that too. - all of us are able to share some of our fears and troubles, but also we all also are able to remember times in our lives when God had given us a sign or just an affirmation that he does love us and care for us.

Some scholars think that John included this story for other symbolic reasons.

As you may recall the jars holding the water were used for ceremonial/ religious washing/ cleaning and then they were converted to vessels for holding wine and for celebration

The water jars were given a new task - as Israel would be given - and that new task of declaring the Good news would be like the best wine at the heavenly banquet. This would have reminded the early Jewish Christians of Isaiah’s prophecies (in chapter. 25, 6) that:

“On this mountain the Lord of Hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food and a feast of well-aged wines” and then in the passage from Chapter 62, v. 5:

“as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.”

I think that we can all relate to this story. The wedding party has been buzzing along with good food and wine. Then as the wine runs out it seems like the blessings have evaporated. In the same way, for many years we have been fortunate and perhaps complacent in our country. Then the challenges of climate change and epidemic have made it all seem harder to maintain community and cohesiveness in both our church and wider communities.

Today’s reading also reminds us that as we share God’s extravagant love in our own generous and at times unexpected hospitality to others, so our lives become signs to those around us of God’s bountiful grace.

. As one commentator, Brother Julian writes

“God’s life and love is offered to us all, but to avail of it we need to be on the same wavelength as Jesus. For that to happen, we could do no better than to take the cue Mary gave to the catering staff: “Do whatever he tells you to”

That means keeping our ears open and maintaining our relationship with him”

The Trumpets Sound the Angels Sing [the Feast Is Ready to Begin](#) Graham Kendrick

The trumpets sound
The angels sing
The feast is ready to begin
The gates of Heav’n are open wide
And Jesus welcomes you inside

Tables are laden With good things
O taste the peace That He brings
He'll fill you up With love divine
He'll turn your Water into wine

Chorus

Sing with thankfulness
Songs of pure delight
Come and revel in
Heaven's love and light
Take your place
At the table of the King

The feast is ready to begin
The feast is ready to begin

The hungry heart He satisfies
Offers the poor His paradise
Now hear all Heaven
And earth applaud
The amazing goodness of the Lord

Chorus

Jesus (echo)	
We thank You (echo)	Repeat
For Your love (echo)	
For Your joy (echo)	

Chorus

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

Generous hospitality is at your heart, loving God, and as your people we seek to be generous and hospitable. May we listen actively to those who are calling us to intervene for good, those who are concerned for the

welfare of the earth, those who see the needs of the poor, those who can point us toward what actions will bring about impactful change.

May we be open to provide radical hospitality with the mindset that the value of a person is in their personhood and that they are your child, not the circumstances in which they find themselves.

May we celebrate with joy when good things transpire and delight in moments of beauty, may our joy be infectious as it rings through every corner of the earth.

May we accept the kindness of friends and strangers, big or small, may this warm our hearts and encourage us to do likewise.

Be with us as we take our place in your world and guide us as we walk your way of compassion.

COMMISSIONING AND BENEDICTION

As you go from here, be of generous heart and spirit, offer kindness to all you encounter, celebrate and delight in the goodness of God.