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What Mary Knew
John 2:1-12

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It doesn't sound like a very Presbyterian story does it?

Often we see extravagance and indulgence as clashing with our value for self denial and frugality.
So what do you think of this story?

It was after Jesus called his first couple of disciples that Jesus led them from the Jordan to Galilee,
It seems that life is getting back to normal, the disciples will be doing discipleship things,
Jesus is on his way back home....it seems so normal.

Just outside Jesus home town, there was a community event, a wedding, and all were invited.

When we go to a wedding we know what to expect right?

After the solemn vows are spoken, there will be a party to celebrate, express joy and support.

Similarly, people of Jesus time knew what to expect of weddings.

They were occasions to help the family gain status, so providing well for guests was important.

Times for a whole community to celebrate with extravagance and feasting, AND

Weddings often lasted for a full week.

In this setting we catch a glimpse of Jesus doing regular kinds of things, with regular folk...

As such you would think that it would be easy to talk about on a Sunday morning.

But I have avoided preaching on this text for years because there is much here that I find troubling.

Over the last two weeks I have waffled, does this passage have something to say to us today or would another passage serve us better?

So far since Christmas we have been working on the life of Jesus,

And this story is seen by John as the beginning of Jesus ministry, so different from the other gospels,

It seemed that the reasons to look at this together were more compelling than the troubling elements,
So let's name the troubling aspects in order to find something for us today.

After partying for days, when guests had finished off the provisions days earlier than expected

They were not hungry, they had already over indulged, rather than letting the party wind down,

When the wine ran out, Jesus provided over 120 gallons of wine..... Party on!

Troubling...because of my expectation of Jesus,

I admit in my most spiritual self, I wanted Jesus to tackle world hunger and poverty,

To do something I consider significant as he began his ministry with his disciples so why this?

Secondly, the interaction between Jesus and his mother...sounds edgy if not rude...

As a parent or grand parent, the "WWJD" would not be perhaps the best way to go with this passage
for our youth. We set these aside for another time in order to learn about Jesus and ministry.

This story gives us a fuller picture of God.

It started off quietly, Jesus just one of the guests invited to a wedding.

Isn't it amazing to think of God as enjoying people, laughing, celebrating with people.

Isn't it wonderful to think of Jesus as enjoying a meal, lifting a glass to toast the bride and groom,

Joining in the marriage procession,

We need to remember this story, of the wedding in Cana, when God in Jesus came to town,

Because too often we think of God as far off, severe, angry.

In Jesus we see God who is approachable, happy to spend time with people, enjoying people,

Ordinary people like us....In other words God delights in and celebrates with us too.

When we are tempted to believe God is too holy to be with us, this story helps us to see that God is not
confined by our expectations of holy, in fact in God's presence the ordinary becomes holy.

Just as God enjoys us, we are invited to enjoy God's presence,

The truth is that God's presence should be celebrate extravagantly, in the same super abundant, cup
overflowing, joyful way as a wedding or other human celebration.

Although there is time for us to show quiet reverence in worship, there is also time to celebrate God's presence with us, joy is not just for outside the sanctuary as if God could not see us,
Both joy and solemn reverence have their place in our worship.
But it is also true that God is not just with us celebrating with us in worship, but in all of our lives.
Just as water was turned to wine outside the sanctuary, a Jesus life and ministry are intertwined,
Our lives and ministries are to be intertwined.
Although it is easy for us to set aside a short time on Sunday to take care of our religious obligations,
Then get on with the rest of our lives...
Our worship and work are to be integrated,
We are to live as God's people, as followers of Christ, live on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday.....
As well as on Sunday
Our lives are to be lived in the light of the gospel, and we are to read the gospel in the light of our lives.
Just as God enjoys being with us in all our lives,
so we should enjoy being with God in all our lives as our invited guest
This passage highlights for us truth about God,
giving us a fuller picture of God and helping us to more fully trust God
In addition, this passage points to the truth about us,
John contrasts Abundance ...with emptiness
Jesus came that we might have life and have it in all abundance.
The huge quantities of wine recounted here remind us of God's extravagant love and provision,
They come as the tanks are empty,
Not just the wineskins were empty, but the vessels for water for ritual cleansing were empty.
Spiritual and physical thirst are implied.
This first miracle shows Jesus not only fills the emptiness both spiritual and physical,
But fills to overflowing,
Most of us today know about emptiness, experience deep thirst,
Whether we through our own choices, disappointment or events in life have hurt us
For some of us, we grow tired of what we are doing, weary of work we began doing for God,
But have somehow lost our focus, so we continue on the treadmill of activity as a distraction.
For some of us, chasing success in our careers has left us empty, wondering what life is about,
And others it has been challenges to our physical wellbeing or to what we expect of God,
That has left us empty wondering who God is and what God is doing.
This is the truth about us that leaves us thirsty for the much greater truth about God
God who loves us, enjoys being with us in all times, God who celebrates and eats with us,
Meets us where we are, even in the midst of emptiness
And Jesus who is approachable as a friend, is able to fill us up to the brim with abundance and joy.
I am liking this passage the more I think about it!
The passage shows us the truth about God and about us and begs us to respond,
Pointing us to a truth about our role in the community.
When the wine ran out, Mary went to Jesus and challenged him to do something.
Jesus reply was this wasn't their responsibility, and it wasn't time yet
As God spoke through his mother.
It seems that even Jesus on this occasion was surprised by the request,
Feeling unready to act, but at the urging of his mother, the sign occurred,
And Jesus ministry began in spectacular fashion, pointing to God's abundance for all.
We as people in the church have seen what God can do in the world, what God continues to do.
Like Mary we have had glimpses and experiences of God's presence with us,
So we should know what Mary knew, that our trust is well placed in God
Who enjoys being with us, celebrates with us, in every situation

No matter if we consider it outside of what God should be doing or not,
No matter how far from God it seems.
No matter how far from church or what we consider holy and religious,
If there is a need, it is right and proper to bring the concern to Jesus,
It is also important to recognize that what happened not just through Jesus words,
But through the hands and feet of others, who did as Mary and Jesus instructed,
Mary's words, Jesus instructions, the servants' actions, the master of ceremony recognition of what he
was drinking, and highlighting in for the community, so they all could enjoy it all played a part
Likewise what we do and say as ordinary people, in God's power can bring joy and abundance
The truth is it takes all of us to be salt and light in the world, whether, through our trust, our guidance,
our hands, our feet, our awareness of what is happening, or pointing out the truth for others,
God can use each of us to reveal God's presence and extravagant grace.
As disciples we also are called to be present in the world with our Risen Christ,
To celebrate all the good things that God has given to us,
We are called to be aware of the concerns of the world, and aware of how God is moving,
Calling others to join us as we cooperate with Christ,
Pointing others to the truth of the situation that may be beyond their sight and understanding
Like servants at a wedding banquet we are asked to use what we have and are,
in our place of work or community, home or in recreation.
What seems to us to be as ordinary as water can, when offered to God,
be changed into wine for all to enjoy, for some to believe.
Today I offer my ordinary thoughts and words, as an ordinary person,
Trusting that God will use them as God sees fit, even if I don't recognize what God is doing.
Although my efforts are at best inadequate, I need to trust that God is present and working if not
through me, in spite of me,
It is not up to us to make a miracle happen, to do impressive things
But to offer ourselves to God, along with what we say and do, ordinary as they may seem
Even offering our emptiness to God to be filled by whatever hands and feet God sends when we are
empty, burned out or discouraged,
Because the truth is that God who loves us and enjoys being with people, is with us,
Although we at times may be empty God who delights in us,
Is able to fill us up to overflowing with joy and abundance of life.
God is able to take what seems ordinary in our lives so cups overflow with God's grace
May it be so, in us and through us,
Amen