

Water Into Wine

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Preacher: Pastor Cathy Hall Stengel

[0 : 00] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Day. I thought about wearing a sweatshirt. What do you think the sweatshirt would say? Go Bills. How many people watched last night?

[2 : 11] I was driving home from the youth retreat, so I had looked up the Bills score and put my phone over here and just watched it, watched it, watched it win, watched it win.

A big day for Buffalo and all the Bills fans that are everywhere. For those of you I have not met and those of you who are watching online, I'm Kathy Stengel, one of the pastors.

And I want to introduce you to Loretta, who is playing for us this morning. And I hope that you'll give her a warm welcome since it's the first time that she's playing for us today.

We recognize that a lot of people, we're just going to say it, a lot of people are home trying to keep safe, home quarantining, home because a family member.

You know, the virus has gone one person, two people, three people, four people over a period of weeks. And so we're grateful for those of you who can be here with us.

[3 : 14] And we expect you to sing twice as loud with your masks on. And so that we can hear everyone. Our scripture story this morning is one that is familiar to many.

And it is the wedding at Cana where Jesus turns the water into wine. Everybody familiar with that? I mean, at some level. And if you're not, that's okay.

We're not turning our grape juice into wine. It's just the way the United Methodist Church rolls. But it's a story that part of what I'll share at the end of the day is a story of abundance and joy.

A story of a savior who also can honor and be a part of something that is good and fun and where there is laughter and celebration.

And so I hope that we can be a part of that this morning as we worship together. So the peace of Christ be with you. Let us pray.

[4 : 23] Lord, we lift so many things to you. We lift our youth and the leaders who are at Camp Finley this morning gathering for worship and getting things cleaned up and ready to rock and roll on their way home.

We ask that you be present with those who are struggling with COVID symptoms and waiting for relief. For those who are fearful, we pray that they will stay where they need to be to be safe in this time of such high transmission.

We're grateful that we have the guidance and encouragement of people here and people around us who can do their best to help to keep us safe.

Be present here and in all the spaces and places where people are a part of our worship this morning. We pray and give thanks in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Our first hymn, Trust and Obey, the author of the words was at a revival with Reverend Moody, and they were asking for people to give their testimonies and how God had moved in their lives.

[5 : 53] and a young man stood up and said, I'm not quite sure yet, but I'm going to trust and do my best to obey. And he took those words and he wrote this hymn, and that's what we're asked to do as Christians.

So I invite you to stand as we sing Trust and Obey. When we walk with the Lord in the light of his word, what a glory he sheds on our way.

While we do his goodwill, he abides with us still. And with all who will trust and obey.

Trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.

But we never can prove the delights of his love, until all on the altar we lay.

[7 : 38] For the favor he shows, and the joy he bestows.

But for them who will trust and obey. Trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, But to trust and obey.

Then in fellowship sweet, we will sit at his feet, or we'll walk by his side in the way.

What he says, we will do. What he says, we will do. Where he sends, we will go.

Never fear, only trust and obey. Trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.

[9 : 20] You may be seated. You may be seated. Good morning, church.

As we come to our time of giving today, we know there are many things on our hearts and on our minds today. So much is happening in the world, so much of which we are a part. Today, we are also mindful of all the ways in which we are a church that works to build justice in the world.

We do that through part of our giving. We do that through all the ways in which we serve all God's children. As we stand here on this weekend, which is a weekend we are reminded of one of those more recent prophets in our life, who reminded us to love one another and to reach out and build a world of justice.

Think about how your giving can support that work. So please use your gifts and use this time as we come together and offer our gifts. Thank you.

Amen. Bless the Lord, O my soul, O my soul Worship His holy name Sing like never before O my soul, I'll worship Your holy name The sun comes up, it's a new day dawning It's time to sing Your song again Whatever may pass and whatever lies before me Let me be singing when the evening comes

[11 : 34] Bless the Lord, O my soul, O my soul Worship His holy name Sing like never before O my soul, I'll worship Your holy namekins season Amen.

Amen. Gracious and loving God, we are always amazed by how you pour out yourself into our lives.

The ways you give us of yourself so freely. So Lord, let us receive and model that love as we pour ourselves back into one another and into you.

Please accept our gifts today as they go to the honor and the glory of your name. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord, we pray. Amen. As we come to this time of offering our hearts and those things that may be on our mind this morning up to God, I'll invite you in a minute if you have something to share to offer that.

You may or may not have seen the prayer request that Tom Crosby's mother passed away this past week, and we certainly hold all of them in our care and prayers and are grateful that he could be here with us this morning.

[14 : 30] What else would you like to share this morning? Joys, concerns? Yes.

Yes. Thank you.

If you didn't hear that, prayers for Phil's mom who had a stroke and heard from Sarah at the retreat over the weekend some of those concerns.

Anything else? Let us be in prayer. Oh God, we pray.

Maybe all the time. Maybe once in a while. Maybe we are people who pray only when things get desperate. Or not at all.

[15 : 48] We ask that you hear us when we call out to you. Sometimes we don't even know it's a prayer. Sometimes we just need help.

Or guidance. Or strength. We pray for those who find themselves confused and afraid. Whether by virtue of a stroke like Phil's mom or those who find themselves in the grief and shock of death, even when they saw it coming in the cross-bath.

There are so many families who are affected and who are isolated and quarantined and keeping safe in this world that we keep thinking we get to know.

And then it changes. In the midst of all of that, we give thanks. We give thanks for leaders and youth who are willing to wear masks all the time at a retreat.

We give you thanks for the courage that it takes to be in ministry among your people. We ask you to give us the courage of creativity and endurance to continue to figure out how do we care for one another when we can't be together.

[17 : 17] We give you thanks for sunshine and pray for warmth. We give you thanks for the bills. Not that you are in management of football teams, but we still are grateful for their victory.

We pray for young adults who are going back to some version of college. We pray for those who can't go back.

We pray for those who are struggling with coursework and the challenges of another semester ahead. We pray for their families.

We are vulnerable people. We are human. And we work hard to keep this life that we have. So we ask you to bless us in our efforts.

Bless us in the work that you have called us to in the ministries we love. And Lord, we pray that you help our faces to shine with our understanding of your comfort and encouragement and love.

[18 : 25] For all this and so much more, we give you thanks and praise in Jesus' name. Amen. While I'm up here, I just want to...

It's in your bulletin, just a reminder of tomorrow night's charge conference that will be here in the sanctuary. We'll be beginning at 7 and then with election of officers and things like that.

And then at 7.30 or so with a conversation about how we're going to go and where we're going to go from here. And so I just want to make you aware of that.

If you have any questions, feel free to ask Pastor Scott or myself after church this morning. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[19 : 27] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside and said, everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink. But you have saved the best till now. What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory and his disciples believed in him.

This is the word of our Lord. Thanks be to God. So, we have a wedding gathering. And it says on the beginning, on the third day, a wedding took place. Now, a wedding back in the time of Jesus among the Jewish culture was not an afternoon and evening sort of event. Now, we have weddings and we have a rehearsal with a party or dinner or something, maybe on Friday and then the weddings on Saturday and then a reception. And yes, those of us who have hosted or parented weddings know that there's more to it than that in terms of it's not just those two partial days. But in a lot of ways, that is what it is. But with other cultures, that isn't the way it is necessarily. And the celebration goes on for numbers of days. And if you think about it, we think about having a wedding and our relatives who live far away, they either drive in or they fly in and then they drive out or fly out. Well, think about that if you had to walk. So, if you walked or took a horse or donkey or whatever it is, and you found your way to a wedding back in Jesus' day, the idea of turning around the next day and going back, no way. Because you don't know months, years it could be before you see the people again. In John's gospel, I want to share with you some interesting kind of information things about today's reading. First of all, you'll hear in the language that this is the first sign, not miracle, but sign of Jesus being who he is. Gospel of John doesn't use the term miracles. It uses the term sign. And part of the rationale for that is that a sign is something that speaks to something coming. It's a miracle is here. It happens. And it has an effect on people, but it doesn't always point us towards the future.

[24 : 29] A sign, and there are seven of them in the gospel of John, are signs of what is to come. And we'll get back to that in just a minute. Jesus has been baptized, been to the wilderness, has called his disciples, and now they're all invited to this wedding and the celebration. So we go from being baptized last week to being now he's been to the 40 days and 40 nights in the wilderness, and now he is here with his disciples. One of the things that was most important and is still important to this day in the Middle East is hospitality. It's one of the unbelievable differences in cultures. And it's not just the Middle East. There are other cultures that it's like they're they're learn, they learn from the time they're very small about hospitality. What do I mean by that?

Well, my own experience in the Middle East is meeting somebody during the day and we talk and we get to know each other a little bit and then they invited me to dinner. And the woman that I was with at that particular moment. And we went. Now, probably that's not going to happen if you're in the city of Buffalo or if you're in Tonawanda or wherever you might find yourself. First of all, we as American in our culture, and I'm asking you to separate from the COVID reality because that adds a whole another layer.

Nowadays, you won't invite anybody to a meal unless you know that they're family and you've been around them. But in the Middle East and in other parts of the world, to meet you is to want to know you.

To meet you is to want to be with you and to exchange some time. And the way and the place to do that is over a meal. A group of us traveled in Israel and we met a family. There were about between 20 and 25 of us. We met a family and they shared with us about their life, about what it meant to be Palestinians living in Israel, in Jerusalem. And so by the time we were finished talking, they invited all of us to eat with them. Now, most of us didn't know what to do because the home, the environment, everything about it told you that this was not a family of abundance. This was not a family that had a lot of food and space to share. But wait a minute, did I say this was a family that didn't have abundance? Well, that would be my observation being in their space, in their home. It was me deciding that they couldn't afford to do this, that this wasn't something that would be okay to do. But from their perspective, there was no other way than to feed us, than to do the practical thing out in the kitchen that might look like the loaves and the fishes in terms of putting in more rice or adding more pita bread or whatever it was, enough to feed us.

Through Journey's End, my husband's church, which is the Kenmore United Methodist Church, they are hosting and housing a family from Afghanistan. And in that situation, the church is providing for them a place to live because the Kenmore Church has apartments. So they're living in one of the church's apartments, furniture, clothing, because these refugees, if you look back to when they were escaping, they were escaping basically only with what they carry. And they have a seven-month-old, now nine-month-old daughter. And so the food and everything is being provided for them by the church. But when people from the church come to deliver things or bring something, what happens?

[29 : 04] They feed them. And some of the people from the church struggle with that. No, no, no. You know, we provide these things for you and your family. But for these refugees, it didn't matter where they were.

If they were in Afghanistan or in Germany or here in our country. If you have, you share. So it is back to the wedding reception, which is part of the story is that you don't stop serving your guests' wine in the middle of a reception. Mary, the mother of Jesus, and she's not called Mary in this passage. She's only called the mother of Jesus. She's only mentioned twice in the entire gospel of John. And some of it makes sense when you hear that this is the first time. And she says to him, you know, I want you to do this. And he's like, look, mom. Now, I would encourage you to understand that it's okay to laugh at this encounter. Because it's kind of like the mother, you see your grown son and you're basically like, come on, I know you can do this. I know you got the gifts. You can help this family. Because the bridegroom is going to be embarrassed and we don't want to do that.

And you can do this, Jesus. And Jesus is like, look, mom, this is not the time. This is not my time.

So, part of what he's talking about is that the next time that Mary shows up in this story is when she's at the foot of the cross, when Jesus is dying.

The quantity of wine. Now, who all here has been to a wedding reception? One or 20 or 30.

[31 : 10] The quantity of wine, and this is not the beginning of the reception. This is in the middle. The quantity. 120 to 180 gallons of wine. Now, I'm thinking they invited the whole town.

I don't know about you, but how could you possibly serve to drink 120 to 180 gallons of wine after they've already had food and wine? But, you know, that's just a big party. And the wine that Jesus produced as a sign came after the wedding wine was gone. And not only that, it was better wine than what they'd already been drinking.

Wine in the Middle East, as it is in many parts of Europe and other countries, wine is more available than clean water. Because of the alcohol content in the wine, it's safer to drink than a lot of places. It's not like we think about, well, we wouldn't choose, unless we were struggling with our health, to drink wine three meals a day. But in places where the wine is safer to drink than the water, it changes our perspective on some of that.

So who are the characters in this morning's reading? Basically, we have Jesus. We have Mary. We have the head of the servant group, and we have the groomsmen. And we have this experience where, first of all, these, when they talk about stone containers, to hold 60 gallons, those of you know better than I, would they be like this tall? Do you think? Who knows? Water, liquid, period.

Something, you know, that probably shaped like this, and was very heavy. They did not take these to the water to get water. They brought water and poured it in. Trip after trip after trip after trip after trip.

[33 : 36] Any camping people here? Have you ever had to go to find, to get water, like from the faucet? We had one of those square things that, it was blue, but you could see through it, and it was soft.

And you'd carry it to the faucet where we were camping, and fill it with five gallons of water, and then try to carry it back, because carrying in a bucket, or carrying it in something else, slips, slosh all over the place. Heavy, heavy. Five gallons of water is heavy. Anybody know how much it weighs? I don't. 40 pounds? 40 pounds. That's heavy. It's heavy. If you imagine 10 gallons, five on each arm. That's a lot of carrying. Anybody got the arms to do that over and over again to get 180 gallons of wine? Anybody? Volunteers? No. Well, we work. We may be retired, some of us. We may work hard in jobs. We may work hard at a desk, or a computer, or with students. We may work hard at being parents, or spouses, or all kinds of things. We may be working hard at being teachers in what's almost an impossible environment. So I want you to consider the fact that we carry water all day, every day.

That we, as our people of faith, we work to pray, to serve, to teach, to comfort, to encourage, to read the scriptures, to be in touch, and offer words of encouragement. We carry water all the time.

But we don't think about it. And when we hear about this particular story, who are the first people that know that Jesus is more than what he seems? Anybody? The servants.

This is not a grand reveal center stage. It becomes a big reveal. But the real people that Jesus chose to share in this reveal of his power and his glory and his ability to change water into wine are the people who carried the water, who kept carrying the water. And I think about us, the people who keep carrying the water, taking care of family members, tending to those we love, grieving for those we've lost in faith, knowing there's comfort, knowing there's comfort, and yet feeling grief. We carry the water because we are called to be faithful people. And we do it for years and years and years, sometimes our whole life. And part of what Jesus is offering in this passage today is that in that hard work, in the exhaustion of COVID, in the exhaustion of life these days, that a part of what we get to see are the places where Jesus shows up and invites us to rejoice, to celebrate, to give thanks. Because we know that not because we do the work, but in the work of faith, Jesus is revealed. In the work of faith,

[37 : 28] Jesus is revealed. Now, I know that the kids from the youth retreat are not watching. Some of you may be related to some of those kids who are on the retreat.

But after each talk by one of the leaders or someone who's there, then we meet with the students in small groups and we talk about what they heard. The first meeting with the group that I was with, I thought, if I could compare it, it would be as though the wedding guests had just been told, there's no more wine.

Because they were like, well, what about this? And what about this? And they were over here and over there and up here and over there. And pretty soon we're talking about stuff that has nothing, nothing to do with where we are, not our physical environment, not the topic at hand. It's like, if you've ever worked with seventh graders, maybe you have an idea.

It was carrying water because the other person and I leading the group, we had to think as we're working and we're carrying this water of trying to be faithful, how do we do this? How do we show up for these kids when it feels as though their attention span is 10, 12 seconds?

Well, first of all, you take them tubing and they wear themselves out. And so then when they sit with you the next time, oh, oh, like they're kind of like you all sitting, sitting still. And we don't have any, what were they, what are the, oh, voodoo dolls. That was one of the things that came up in the first session. And I was like, time out, however you do it, time out. Like we're not going to talk about voodoo dolls. But now it became, yeah, I, I can relate to what that person shared because there are times when I've been teased or felt left out. I can relate to something that this person said because I worry a lot. So there was this sense of having carried water and carried water and carried water that now, we can see how God sends Jesus with the good wine to change people. And there might be days when we think it's never going to happen, that we're never going to feel like we've done enough. We're never going to feel as though we've made enough difference in the world. And I'm here to invite you to believe not in the thousands, but in the one, not in carrying water for all the world, but helping someone find a glass of water to the drinking fountain or whatever. Sometimes it has to be that we look to what God has called us to in the water carrying and recognizing that if we can be present while the Holy Spirit touches even one squirrely, wily seventh grader, then there is such great joy. Not because we did it, but because the environment was created and the water was provided and there was transformation. Sometimes that happens at bedsides. Sometimes that happens in an Afghan family's living room. Sometimes that happens in hospital nurseries. It happens in classrooms. It happens in the hallway. It happens in tubing. When every one of the students wanted to go down the hill, with their tube attached to everybody else's. So 17 kids, 12 adults. That is how many tubes we had.

[42 : 09] Everybody grabbed left. Well, the one who grabbed right, they ended up cutting loose, but that's a different story. And you can ask Pastor Mike about this, but he didn't hurt himself. He went down the hill by himself, though.

So basically, you have this blob of kids attached and adults and attached, and they want two in the middle who are not attached because they want to bounce and fly and do all the things they do. And the rest of us are supposed to keep them safe. And here are the three people who work at this tubing place who are basically like, okay, these are the same kids that want to lay in their tubes and ride up the moving sidewalk that takes you to the top. You're supposed to walk, carry your tube. No, these kids were going to lay down and get a ride. But they got into conversation about who we were and where we were from, and pretty soon the three guys at the top were saying, no, no, just get in your tubes and we'll do the pushing and the pulling. We'll do the water carrying. You be blessed. So some of us carry a lot of water water and feel sometimes like, oh, Lord, show me the glory, the fun, the joy. I'm inviting us to know that we are it.

And as we receive the body and the blood of Christ, we are called once again to recognize where does my health come from? Where does my joy come from? Where does the reward for my work, which may be heaven after we die, but it also might be that we get to carry another bucket of water so that Jesus can do amazing things, that we might fix, drive, feed, pray, teach, sing, play an instrument, anything to the glory of God, knowing that people are being changed. And what did Mary say to the servants?

Do whatever he tells you. So in this season, which is everybody's season, never mind COVID, which is always do more, do more, give more, go more. Maybe we just stop and listen until we hear what it is that God says.

Because as Mary said, we do whatever he tells us. At least we hope and try to do that. So let us pray.

[45 : 07] Lord, in your mercy, we ask you, keep us getting water to be transformed into the wine of community.

Give us ways and places to use that water to help other people's lives be transformed. And Lord, sometimes we pray that we might be the recipients of the transformation.

Feed us, fill us, bread, cup, body, blood, wine, bread. And lift us, teach us.

And Lord, oh Lord, give us chances for laughter. In Jesus' name, amen. Come now to the time of sharing in Jesus' great gift to us during this time of communion.

And let us ready our hearts as we come to the Lord's table. The Lord be with you. And also with you. Lift up your hearts. Lift up your hearts.

[46 : 50] Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God. It is right and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere, to give thanks to you, almighty God, the creator of heaven and earth.

You formed us in your image and breathed into us the breath of life. When we turned away and our love failed, your love remained steadfast.

You delivered us from captivity, made covenant to be our sovereign God, and spoke to us through your prophets, who looked for that day when justice would roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

When nation would not lift up sword against nation, neither would they study war anymore. And so with your people on earth, and all the company of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn.

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

[48 : 06] Hosanna in the highest. Hosanna in the highest.

Hosanna in the highest. Hosanna in the highest.

Hosanna in the highest.

wasser. He gave it to his disciples and said, take and eat. This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.

When the supper was over, he took the cup, gave thanks to you, and he gave it to his disciples, and he said, drink from this, all of you. This is my blood, sign of the new covenant, which is poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sin.

[49 : 33] Every time that you drink it, do so in remembrance of me. And so, in remembrance of these, your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice in union with Christ's offering for us as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

Christ has died. Christ has risen. Christ will come again. Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here and on these gifts of bread and cup. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by his blood.

By your spirit, make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world, until Christ comes in final victory and we feast at his heavenly banquet.

Through your Son, Jesus Christ, with your Holy Spirit and in your Holy Church, all honor and glory is yours, Almighty God, now and forever.

Amen. And let us pray together the prayer that Jesus taught us to pray. Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

[50 : 50] Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen. Amen. And those who are serving today, please come forward.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Thank you.

[52 : 57] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

[56 : 29] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. We probably really see Jesus reveal himself in our times of need when we sit in prayer and we're with scripture and we're listening to hear him.

In the song today, it describes God as my shield, my strength, my portion, deliverer, my shelter, strong tower, and my very present help in time of need.

So I invite you to stand as we sing Made Me Glad. I will bless the Lord forever I will trust him at all times He has delivered me from all fear

[58 : 29] He has set my feet upon our rock I will not be moved I'll say of the Lord You are my shield, my strength, my portion, deliverer, my shelter, strong tower, my very present help in time of need.

Whom have I in heaven but you?

There's none I desire beside you You have made me glad And I'll say of the Lord You are my shield, my strength, my portion, deliverer, my shelter, strong tower, my very present help in time of need.

Oh, my shield, my strength, my strength, my strength, my portion, deliverer, my shelter, strong tower, my very present help in time of need.

Oh, Jesus. My very present help in time of need. Oh, Jesus. Oh, Jesus.

[61 : 02] My very present help in time of need. Oh, Jesus. Oh, Jesus. Oh, Jesus.

Oh, Jesus. Jesus did bring help in time of need. does bring help in time of need. And sometimes it looks like a party. And sometimes it looks like the comfort of a friend.

Jesus brings help in time of need. May we believe it. May we feel it. May we know it. And sometimes may we just keep looking because it's there.

Go in that peace and comfort. Amen. I share a strong tower.

My merry present. Help me by my shield. My saving.

[62 : 31] My portion. Deliverer. My shelter. Strong tower. My merry present.

Help in time of need. My very present. Help in time of need.

My very present. Help in time of need.

Yeah. Running over from one space. Or you glide on a pool. You can do that. Thanks, guys. You please.

Bye. You loved it. We spray it. Do not..