

St. Martin's Church, Williamsburg, Virginia
January 17, 2016 Epiphany 2C
The Reverend Dr. Kathleen V. Price, Priest in Charge

Texts: Isaiah 62: 1-5; Psalm 96; I Corinthians 12: 1-11; John 2: 1-11

First, Let me thank you for this opportunity to continue my call to ordained ministry.

I retired 20 months ago because my husband was very ill.

We thought we had more time...he died two weeks after my retirement.

I have been with Sven at Abingdon for the past year in a very limited role.

I welcome this time with you to be more actively involved in the life of the parish.

Second, let me assure you that I am not going to make sweeping changes for change sake.

I may do things differently from your previous rector and assistant -

but that is because we all have different styles and I do not necessarily know how you have always done it.

Your dear rector emeritas, Pickett Miles, is a friend from way back - he wrote one of my recommendations for seminary...more about that later with his permission.

The gospel of John is often called the sign gospel.

The wedding feast at Cana...Jesus' first miracle in his public ministry...the first of the signs showing us who Jesus is and what Jesus does...

Jesus was responding to a perceived crisis, running out of wine during the wedding reception.

It was the custom that when a daughter was born, the family started putting wine away for the future wedding reception.


The custom was to have a wonderful party for the whole community, they didn't need wine – they wanted it.

A successful party is not a need, but a desire, something we want.

Elaborate plans for weddings are made well in advance.

Often I am the last to be called – after plans for the reception, dress, even photographer and flowers.

I caution couples about making the sacred service a prelude to the cocktail party.



We don't need an elaborate feast – a ham and cheese sandwich and a glass of milk or tea would suffice.

But we want the best – roast beef, all those vegetables that go with it, some crab cakes, wine, beer, booze, and an elaborate cake – larger than we ever see, or often need, decorated with enough sugar icing to send us into diabetic shock.

Can you imagine a wedding feast scaled down to sandwiches - and all of that money left over sent to a homeless shelter?

We don't even need that reception with all of those little sandwiches with the crust cut off...bite sized cakes and cookies, cheese trays, fruit... wine, beer, and booze...

Most of us don't need to eat between meals.

This is not about needs, but wants.

Think back to your own wedding, or that of your children or grandchildren.

We want the best...we want to look good and successful in the eyes of our family and friends.

It's what we want, not what we need.

Now before you think I am being an after Christmas Scrooge, hear me out.

This lesson is telling us that God will not only supply our needs, God responds to our wants....to live life abundantly.

Not only was there more wine, it was the best and it was plentiful!

I was in Greece this past summer and saw some of those water jars- many of them as tall as I am! That's a lot of water, and a lot of wine!

We often get our wants and needs mixed up.

God wants us to live life fully, but our greatest need is the reassurance that we have the hope and the promise of eternal life.

At the end of our life as we know it, there will be a transformation as we move from this world, full of wants and desires, to a world greater than we can imagine where all of our needs will be met.

The prophet Isaiah tells us we shall be *a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord...
A royal diadem in the hand of your God...for the Lord delights in you...
God rejoices over you.*

There are no qualifiers in that proclamation...not when we are good, or not so good,
or even bad...not when we resist temptation...God delights and rejoices
over every single one of us...and for that we should certainly
sing to the Lord a new song!

Even though the Christmas season is over, it's still all about gifts,
not that we give, but are given.

*Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the
same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in
everyone.*

Now there is a bit of a disconnect here –

First Paul tells us that all of the spiritual gifts are activated in everyone...

Then he goes on to say some get one gift, others another...

Allotting to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses...

I'll leave that for Paul to explain when we get to heaven...

In the meanwhile, ALL of the gifts are a bit daunting,

but I urge you to think about the gift or gifts that you have been given.

How are you using them? For your needs and wants?...For God's glory?

Might we turn around yet again...repent...and try to do better?

It is not a mistake that the new wine came from the water jars used for purification rites.

God gives us the best, not always first, but when we need it...and the Gift that God gives
purifies us and gives us the opportunity to lead a new life...filled with the Spirit...
with plenty to share that others too might live life abundantly.

God wants the best for you – and you need to know that!

We want to live well – and we need to know that that means
recognizing our need for God.

I think my call is to help you see the extraordinary in the ordinary events of your life.

Brother Lawrence, in *Practicing the Presence of God*, wrote that washing dishes was holy!

Taking care of our children is holy! And our grandchildren!

Helping with FISH and Meals on Wheels is holy work.

All that we have and all that we are is a gift from God...and that is holy!

A time of transition gives us an opportunity to look at our gifts more carefully...
to determine how to use them more effectively...to look forward to new life.

New life comes from being *illuminated by God's Word and Sacraments...*
new life comes from *shining with the radiance of Christ's glory so that*
he may be known, worshiped, and obeyed from Williamsburg
to the ends of the earth.

Your mission statement in an old directory states:

We are called to serve our Lord Jesus Christ faithfully as his body;
continuing his ministry on earth to the needy, the broken, the unloved,
the spiritually battered as well as those more fortunate,
thereby proclaiming God's love for all people; and in changing times,
to extend Christ's unchanging ministry to the community, our nation,
and the world.

These may be changing times...but God's love is unchanging...and
our ministry goals remain unchanging.

Amen.