

Come, Lord Jesus – make these words your Word, that our hearts may become your heart. Amen.

This season we are going to explore hospitality. As we continue to get outside ourselves as churches, to be more connected to our communities, it's good to look at what it really means to be a host, and a guest, and how blurring the lines between the two can build connections.

If we insist on serving people, they remain guests.

If we invite them to help, they become family.

Here we see Jesus and his mother, guests at a wedding, step in to help the host. Sometimes a guest can bring the transformation we need.

This is an odd story – odd that Jesus' first miracle, his first "sign" or "showing" should involve such a seemingly frivolous request.

A party trick, a chapter in a mother-son drama, a vocational struggle.

Or is it much more than that? Jesus knew something about learning theory.

He knew people don't learn just by being told something. You have to show them.

Most of us pay more attention to things we see than things we only hear about.

So his proclamation of Good News, and the demonstration of it went hand in hand – it was "show" and "tell," – and sometimes "tell" and then "show."

Jesus showed it: "Here, this is what I'm talking about:

When I say freedom, forgiveness, wholeness, this is what it looks like.

God's life is here, here and now. Come and see. Follow me."

The early Christians called these demonstrations "deeds of power" and "signs."

We call them miracles, but there's nothing miraculous about them;

they're simply the way the Maker of all things operates in his creation. Or hers.

They're deeds of power because God is powerful.

They're signs because they point in the direction of God, and invite faith.

John ends this story by saying, "*Jesus did this, the first of his signs,*

in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him."

Now, the story suggests that Jesus was not yet intending to reveal his glory.

He was just at a party. The time would come for him to go public, but not yet.

But his mother wouldn't take no for an answer. Jesus is a little rude with her...

but he does what she asks. Only he doesn't do it in a small, quiet way.

He doesn't make just enough wine. He makes more than enough.

And not only ordinary, good-enough wine;

He makes more than enough of the best wine this wine steward has ever tasted. This bridegroom, who one moment was facing social humiliation because they were going to run out of wine at his wedding, in the very next is hot stuff because it looks like he has lavished only the best on his guests.

But Jesus was after more than transforming the groom's social standing.

There are bigger transformations in this story....

The transformation of the most ordinary – but essential – substance on earth, water, into vats and vats of finest wine; as water is becomes blood in our bodies. Water, stored in jars meant for purification rites, becoming wine that will echo later, when Jesus speaks of wine as his own blood that heals and forgives.

Water into wine is a big hint for us, because it's impossible, right?

This is change on a molecular level.

So is walking on water, healing leprosy, restoring paralyzed limbs, giving sight to the blind – Jesus' signs are all molecular miracles.

This first "sign" is a big one, because it tells us: Guess what?

He who can change water into wine can also change molecules in our bodies. Nobody could believe that either, when Jesus started to do it. But God is in charge, and God has put this amazing healing power among us.

I knew an Australian Anglican priest named Jim Glennon who died a few years ago. He was a very unassuming man, but he had a powerful gift, charism for healing. Many people with that gift really call what they have a strong gift of faith, to believe in what cannot be seen.

In the list of gifts of the Spirit Paul writes about in the letter to the church in Corinth, he groups faith and healing and working of miracles.

To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

To one is given ... faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles.

These are all gifts of the Spirit to the church, and they were all gifts Paul saw manifest in his churches. They can be in ours too.

Jim Glennon was on staff at the cathedral in Sydney, and he started a little healing service on Wednesday nights. And people came, and many were healed in ways or at speeds that seemed miraculous. Soon they had too many people to use prayer teams – Jim just had people pray in groups.

And people kept getting healed, and telling others about it. Soon there were hundreds of people on Wednesday nights, many more than Sunday. Jim became known and wrote books and had an international ministry of healing and teaching about healing. He told a story of a woman who came to see him one day. She seemed okay, and made polite conversation, so finally he said, "How can I help you?" "Oh, I'm just fine!" she said. "Well then, may I ask why you've come to see me?" Jim asked. "I want to give thanks," she said. That wasn't something he heard much... And she told him how she'd been diagnosed with cancer the year before, and been told there was nothing that could be done for her. But she had a simple faith. She took at face value the verse in the bible that says, "By his wounds, we are healed." So every time she went to communion, where the healing wounds of Christ are celebrated, she affirmed that by faith. And little by little, she got better. No one could explain it; it just was. As she took in that blood of Christ in the precious wine, she was cleansed and healed. Molecules were changed. By faith.

God is in the business of making things whole. Everything Jesus told us and showed us about God's life suggests that healing and wholeness are God's will for us, for the world, for the cosmos. Everything the apostles did after Pentecost showed us that healing and wholeness are God's will for us, for the world, for the cosmos.

But the world tells us different, doesn't it? Our experience tells us different. And we have a tendency – a natural one – to put more credence in our experience than in the faith Jesus has invited to hold, faith in God's power. Do we think, "How can we believe in healing in the face of such suffering?" Or do we look at that unbelievable suffering and see that now of all times is no time for the church to withdraw from the world this amazing gift we've been given?

God has poured God's Spirit upon us, and every church, every church is called to exercise that faith for the healing of the world. Every church. Faith is the ability to believe in what we cannot see. If we see it, it's not faith. So our faith in what we cannot see needs to be stronger than our doubt in what we can see. (*repeat*) Martin Luther King Jr. is one who saw what was not yet, and helped call it into being. It's still not all visible, but by faith he called others to see it too.

We have been called into the ministry of transformation –
bodies, hearts, social systems and structures, all of it.
And we have been promised that the Holy Spirit will give each of us the gifts
we need to carry out that ministry.

No one gets missed... the Spirit gives to each as the Spirit chooses.
Some of us may have a particular spiritual gift of healing, or faith – be open to it.
Some of us will have special gifts of compassion and mercy beyond the normal.
Some of us will have gifts to discern what is going on inside a person.
We are the body of Christ, and Christ made his body the carrier
of this contagion of healing.

Imagine if we spread healing life and love the way others spread disease?

He who can change water into wine, can also change molecules in our bodies
as we invite His Spirit to activate healing energy in us, in others.

And more than that: ...

he who can change molecules in our bodies can also change our hearts.

That is the biggest Sign of all, the healing of our hearts, a healing that has no end.

God can take what we are – gifted, broken, blessed, annoying, faithful, doubting;

He can take the substance we are and transform us into bearers of hope.

There are two transformations we celebrate at this table each week:

the transformation of ordinary bread and wine into the fullness of Christ's life,
AND the transformation of ordinary saints and sinners into healing cells,
ready to infect the world, ready to neutralize the cancerous cells of
greed, racism, injustice, oppression, apathy, indifference.

God has transformed us sinners into saints, ordinary into extraordinary,
finest wine, poured out in abundance, bringing delight to all the parties we go to,
all the parties we make happen in the name of Christ.

I would love to see both Christ Churches become places where people come
expecting celebration and leave experiencing transformation.

“But you have kept the good wine until now,” said the wine steward to the
bridegroom. Friends, you are the good wine. We are the good wine.

Go and be poured out for the healing of the world.

Go, be contagious with God's healing love and light and peace and power.

Let Christ's glory be revealed in you, and many will believe in him.

Amen.

John 2:1-11

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "**They have no wine.**" And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, "Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward." So they took it. When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now." Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. You know that when you were pagans, you were enticed and led astray to idols that could not speak. Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says "Let Jesus be cursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit.

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. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.