

# ST. JOHN'S AT DIOCESAN CENTER IGLESIA EPISCOPAL DE SAN JUAN

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## OUR POTENTIAL (GIFTS!)

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Text of a Sermon preached the First Sunday after Epiphany  
January 16, 2022

ISAIAH 62:1-5 | PSALM 36:5-10  
I CORINTHIANS 12:1-11 | JOHN 2:1-11

The Psalmist lifts a voice and says:

- “ How priceless is your love, O God! \*  
your people take refuge under the shadow of your wings.  
“They feast upon the abundance of your house; \*  
you give them drink from the river of your delights.

“For with you is the well of life, \*  
and in your light we see light.”

And one cannot imagine a more perfect illustration of the light of love that shines forth from the uncreated light of God than Jesus' first miracle, when he turned the water of purification into the wine of abundant joy. John tells us: “Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.”

A sign points the way forward and tells us what lies ahead. It is well known that the Gospel of John is different than the other three biographies of Jesus, Matthew, Mark and Luke. Especially here, in the beginning of Jesus' mission, John wants us to look with fresh eyes on what Jesus' first days were like.

True, he was baptized in the Jordan, but John the gospel writer doesn't show us John the Baptizer doing it. No. What matters is what John says when Jesus approaches him: “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” And “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him.”

True, he called a strange mix of friends and strangers to follow him, but John shows us better how it happened. John remembers that Andrew said to Peter, “Come and See.” Jesus had invited them to come live with him.

So, how will John let us know that Jesus' mission has begun?

I don't know about you, but I have hardly had time to think about New Year's resolutions and routines, fresh starts and course corrections - it's been too darn cold and the return of the virus has caused so much chaos. Even more so, we long for a chance to begin anew.

Our lessons certainly give us one clue. They point away from ourselves. The point directly to the gifts that the person next to us might bring. Do you see the light that can only be revealed in the greater light? That is, the love, that is only created and shared in family and community?

For today, we have been invited to a wedding. We are midway through, and the wine has run out! This will not do. Can anyone help us see what to do next?

Mary, who bore and gave birth to the light, is smiling at us. No. She is laughing. When you read the Gospel of John you must think comedy, not tragedy. It is not just that “all’s well that ends well.” It is also that the gospel is funny, deeply ironic. The conversation between Jesus and Mary is standup. “Woman. What concern is this wine to you and me?” Imagine how many ways you could say that, in how many voices? (Try it!) Jesus and his mother are in on the joke together.

Of course, you idiots. “Do what he says.”

As individuals. As families. As a community. As a nation. As a family of nations. We are in need of a fresh start. We are in need of finally learning the lessons of our false starts.

One year after an insurrection at our capital. On the weekend we celebrate the faith and witness of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King. In a season where we are hoping to learn to finally live with a disease that had threatened to shut us down, we can keep shouting at each other, keep ignoring each other, or pay attention to this sign in Cana of Galilee, and other signs like it that are indeed all around us.

As St. Paul reminds us, God has given his power to the whole Body of Christ. He has shared out his gifts as will, in the end, benefit not just one or two people, but the whole. In fact, the gifts of the Spirit are not gifts given to individuals. They are gifts that only can be seen and understood as they are shared in community.

What good is a wise person who speaks to himself in a closet? What good is a healer who is not there among the sick? What good is your potential, unless you pour it into new jars and share it? What light is there in the power of love in you if you do not share it?

Jesus is all about finding you, pointing out your potential, and inviting you to share it. In the way he does, through the community of the beloved, he shaped the life of Martin Luther King, and in that last week of his life, lifted him up to preach a sermon in the National Cathedral.

Not too many people were listening to that sermon. King's glory days had past. The marches. The political successes. No. He was sidelined and criticized on all sides. He was talking about the evil of war and the rights of the humble people who pick up our trash for a living. Most people in power wanted him to go away.

So five days before he was assassinated he gave us a sign. He said simply. "You know, it's odd. I cannot be who I am meant to be unless you become who you are meant to be." And then he paused, one of those famous pauses, letting that sink in. And concluded: "And you cannot be who you are meant to be unless I become who I am meant to be."

And there you have it: a summary, of the gifts of the Spirit, given to all, for all.

Getting back to the wedding, the miracle is not so much the wine. The miracle is taking those old stone jars, that had been full of water, that had been all used up in the first three days of the feast, and creating a new purpose for them.

This is how to begin a New Year. Turn to your neighbor and see his great potential. Take that potential in you, those things you know that God has given you, and share them with your neighbor. Show up and serve one another.

In that way we reach our goal. In that love we see light. And water is changed to wine. You better believe it. Now we have a party!