

**Westminster Presbyterian Church + 533 S. Walnut St. + Springfield, IL 62704**

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### **Signposts**

John 2: 1-12

Each of the gospels begins Jesus' ministry a little differently. In Matthew, Jesus calls his first disciples and immediately begins healing the sick. In Mark he rebukes an unclean spirit as his first order of business. In Luke he interprets ancient scripture. In John, he goes to a party. John's version of ministry and life of Jesus is not arranged chronologically. John does care about Tuesday coming before Wednesday. He has a much bigger and more important time line in his head. Instead, he tells his story so that each piece will have a deeper meaning and significance. So, to begin, Jesus heads to a party.

Jesus and his mom and his brothers and some of his friends, they have been invited to this wedding bash and the celebration is in full swing. There is good wine and good food, dancing and maybe even a little singing. All of a sudden the wine is gone, used up before anyone thought it would be, and Mary wants Jesus to do something about it. Even though Jesus seems reticent, he solves the problem. Tons of water becomes wine and all are amazed at what good wine it is. And, as the party continues, we are told that this event has been the first of Jesus' signs so that we will see his glory. This story is all about abundance, about getting more than you could ever imagine wanting. It is about Jesus giving the best of the best. It is party time.

This is good news. At least it could be good news...on some other day...after some other week. But it is difficult to hear a passage this morning that is all about having more than enough, about partying down, after seeing what an earthquake has done to the country of Haiti. This country which was already the poorest in the western hemisphere; this country which just a year ago suffered from devastating floods; this country has now lost most of its already poor infrastructure and now grieves the deaths of perhaps 100,000 people (1/6<sup>th</sup> of its population??). No, partying down in the abundance of life does not sound like good news today. In fact, it almost sounds hurtful in the face of our neighbor's plight.

So, what can we say? What can we say after such sadness and devastation? Even if our stomachs are not ready for the full swing of a wedding bash, this passage can still offer us a guide. When the wine runs out, Mary is simple and direct in the face of that problem. "Do what he says," she tells them. Do what he says and the wine will come back. When the joy of life has been lost, Do What He Says, and it will return. When everything that matters has become dry and empty, Do What He Says, and it will get filled. Do what he says. Not just a simple party trick, we learn in this moment that when we are in need we need to do what he tells us to do.

This means we have to listen to his voice. Somehow, in the mix of all of the voices we hear, we must listen for his voice so that we can follow. Especially during weeks like this it is difficult to hear his voice. We hear voices telling us that Haiti will never recover; that we will forget all about them and their great need when the next news cycle comes around. We hear voices that call themselves religious claiming that the Haitian people deserve what has happened to them and that this is simply God's judgment on them. We hear voices of the people themselves: desperate, pain-filled voices. So which voice is that of Christ?

Even though we are only in the second chapter of John's gospel with this wedding passage, we can already learn a lot about Jesus and his voice from what others have said about him so far in John's account. John tells us that Jesus brings about life and his life lights up the whole world and cannot be overcome by any darkness. We learn that he is the Lamb of God who takes away the world's sin. He is God's chosen one, his son. If we are listening to hear Jesus, struggling to hear his voice above the din, then we must listen for a voice that talks of life and light, not darkness and death. We must listen for a voice that speaks of sin being removed and forgiven, not sin being wielded like a weapon against others' misfortune. If we listen for that voice then we will be hearing the voice of Jesus.

Side note: we can also learn from this passage a helpful reminder when tragedies like this happen. The wine ran out at the wedding. Jesus had nothing to do with it. His role was to fill it up again, not to empty it. Whatever each of us believes about why bad things happen to others or to us, Jesus does not bring them about. Earthquakes happen in the world we live in. So do wars and bad economies. Jesus has not forced them on us but he is the only thing that can help us recover. Do you find yourself on empty? Have you run out of all that life has to offer? Listen for Jesus and do what he says. He did not take it away but he can fill it back up.

As we watch our neighbors, the people of Haiti, who have lost everything and have no way to regain their joy, we are commanded to do the same. Listen for Christ's voice in the midst of all of it and do what he says. Do what he says and perhaps we all will get to see Christ's glory.