

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER

January 16, 2022



CHANGE

what does it take to like it?

by Drew Downs

I write frequently about change. Primarily that we like to say we hate change, but that we often *actually* like it. That it is necessary and natural. We're never not changing.

In most contexts, change is a pretty neutral term. In traditional churches, however, the word takes on a negative slant. We describe to each other a bias for *tradition*, for the way things are, and for predictability. In short, we are biased toward the same and

against change. And, in general, we feel pretty OK with that.

However, it is hard to square a posture that leans *away* from change when the gospel itself is fundamentally *about* change.

Most justifications for this *non*-neutrality struggle under the weight of theological scrutiny. So then, what change in us would it take to embrace a holy view of change?

AFTER THE EPIPHANY

Winter 2022

WHAT'S GOING ON

"You know we've got to find a way

To bring some loving here today".

-Marvin Gaye

Dear Ones, this is a moment! Yeah, a **lot of it** feels the same as the last moment. This extended Pandemictide has the feeling of unending sameness, eerie familiarity, and expectant change that makes it all so...so...over *and underwhelming* at the same time. But let us not fall under the weight of our own expectations and instead rejoice in this strange moment for a little longer.

We are now in a strange both/and time in our church calendar. After Epiphany, we began Ordinary Time. This is the regular time of the church year, marked by the color green. It is normal, like the time between the big seasons of Christmas and Lent.

And yet, at the same time, as the Season After Epiphany, it is also bestowed a character that the Season After Pentecost doesn't. So it is both normal and special. *Perhaps that is a useful frame for our moment.*

I also want to share with you two timely items.

Last week, we were able to host an emergency shelter. This allowed a number of people to have a place to stay during the extreme cold. I am grateful for our continued work with the Homeless Coalition and Reach Services to provide life-saving shelter.

And now with Omicron surging, we are making arrangements for a potential hybrid annual meeting. **We will need your help** to ensure this works. Stay tuned!

Drew

AFTER THE EPIPHANY

Winter 2022

FOR SUNDAY

The Second Sunday after the Epiphany

January 16, 2022

Collect

Almighty God, whose Son our Savior Jesus Christ is the light of the world: Grant that your people, illumined by your Word and Sacraments, may shine with the radiance of Christ's glory, that he may be known, worshipped, and obeyed to the ends of the earth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

Reading

From John 2:1-11

"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.""

Reflection

This story is known as the Wedding at Cana and famously represents Jesus's first miracle. Which is obviously a big deal. Both in what it *reveals* about Jesus and how we *understand* the miraculous power *that will continue to be revealed* in the gospel. Tradition has rightly lifted this up as important.

This story is much *more* than a miracle. Precisely because it isn't *really* about Jesus's **power**. It's about his **mission**.

AFTER THE EPIPHANY

The story is told in three acts. In the first, Jesus is going to this wedding with his disciples. It is clear that it is Jesus's mother who is closer to the event itself; Jesus and his entourage seem to serve as Mary's +1. And then they find out that the host has run out of wine. Mary shames her son into performing a miracle: a situation that exposes a bold truth about the relationship between this mother and son.

In the second act, Jesus fixes to remedy this situation. He eyes what amounts to six barrels and tells the servants to fill them with water. These aren't Hydro Flasks or S'well water bottles. These are the dirty tubs people washed themselves in. Jesus transforms a bathtub into a winery.

The third act turns to the steward, the host, and the wedding guests, who respond to the new wine, saying that it's better than what was served earlier. Which really completes the miracle!

There is so much going on in these three parts, we can't address it all. Let us simply settle on the way this is less about *magic* than the *mission*.

Water becoming wine doesn't surprise us. Not from Jesus. But what still tickles is the steward's response. And not just that the wine is surprisingly good. It is surprisingly good because the steward expects the bridegroom to be cheap. *Because everyone is.*

A good case can be made that Jesus was helping the bridegroom save face, but I think it is much bigger than that. I think Jesus was trying to defy the world's low expectations for each other. ***That all of us are liars.*** To this, Jesus says ***I'm not.***

Jesus's true miracle is revealing to the steward that for a world full of selfishness and greed, generosity is a superpower.

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