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Christ Lutheran Church, Ferndale, WA

Second Sunday after Epiphany

January 16, 2022

Isaiah 62:1-5; Ps. 36:5-10; I Corinthians 2:2-11; John 2:1-11

Now that I am the mother of a teenager, I am well-schooled in hearing the language of “you can’t make me” or the body language of “oh, Mother!” Tae did give me permission to say that, and it’s good to remember that even the pastor’s kid is a very normal teenager.

I kind of feel in this gospel story that even though Jesus is 30 years old, he’s at a wedding with his mom and he totally reverts back to his teenage self – when Mary says to him, “they have no wine” Jesus snubs her and basically says, “you can’t make me” when he says “woman, what concern is that to you and to me.”

But Mary was an excellent mother. She remained calm and confident in who her son was and what he could do. Mary knew that at this wedding the host would endure incredible shame if the wine gave out. In first-century culture it would be the ultimate failure in hospitality to run out of wine at the typical multi-day wedding celebration. And because of her longstanding trust and understanding of Jesus, she knew that he could turn scarcity into abundance.

And so instead of arguing with him when he went all teenager on her, **Mary trusted that Jesus would act, and she offered freedom in terms of how it might be done.** Mary told the servants, “Do whatever he asks.” It was Mary’s trust in Jesus that moved him to ask the servants to fill the stone jars for the Jewish rite of purification with water and then draw some out and take it to the chief steward. In that moment, Jesus turned almost 180 gallons of water into wine – and not just any wine, but the very best wine.

Now I know the focus of this story is how Jesus turned water into wine and saved a wedding, but I wonder if perhaps the most important thing that happened in this story, and the thing we can most learn from, was Mary’s trust in Jesus. Mary believed that Jesus could provide abundance, she gave him freedom in how it might be done, and she remained calm, even in the midst of a stressful situation.

Mary was actually the one who ushered in this miracle. If she hadn’t trusted that Jesus could do something, if she had argued with Jesus instead of telling the servants to let him help, this first sign of Jesus’ divinity in the gospel of John may never have happened, and his disciples may not have believed in him.

Mary is the one we can learn from in this story. Because how many times have we been in stressful situations and let our stress get the best of us, and instead of remaining calm we start arguing with those around us, perhaps we even argue with God. But what if instead in the midst of a stressful situation we remained calm, believed that Jesus could help, and gave Jesus freedom in how that might be done. What if we gave up our own need to control and let Jesus bring about abundance? What if we really had the kind of trust in Jesus that Mary did?

You just heard in the Godly Play story how Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke and worked against unjust, racist laws – and every time he did so non-violently. Every situation that MLK was in was stressful.

As we were just reminded in the video, his very life was threatened numerous times until finally he was assassinated in 1968 in Memphis, Tennessee. But it was what Martin Luther King, Jr. said in his final speech the night before he was killed that exemplified the kind of calm and trust that Mary had. Listen to part of what he said that night.

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FmkwI5ItCFk&t=37s>)

I don't know what will happen now.

I'm not concerned. I just want to do God's will.

We will get to the promised land.

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord.

Martin Luther King Jr. exhibited passionate calm and trust that God would bring African Americans who had been oppressed to the promised land of justice and equality. He gave God freedom of how that would happen – I don't know what will happen, he said, I just want to do God's will. MLK let Jesus bring about abundance, but it was his calm and his trust that ushered that abundance in.

I would say that what MLK did in his short life was nothing less than a miracle, though one that has not yet come to fullness. It's a reminder that trusting in Jesus does not mean abdicating our responsibilities to bring about what God desires. In the gospel, the stone jars still had to be filled with water before the miracle could happen. In our world, we who are white still need to do the work of anti-racism and dismantling white supremacy in order for the miracle of liberty and justice for all to come to fruition. Thankfully, as Martin Luther King Jr. reminds us, "the arc of the moral universe is long but it bends toward justice."

The God we worship is a God who never stops offering abundance. Jesus didn't stop at turning one jar of water into wine, and what he created was enough of the very best wine for multiple days of celebration. But it was Mary's calm and trust that ushered that abundance in.

What if the next time you are in the midst of a stressful situation, whether it involves a teenager or not, if you remained calm, believed that Jesus could help, and gave Jesus freedom to bring about abundance. What if you had the same kind of trust in Jesus that Mary and Martin Luther King, Jr. did? Well, it may just be that you would usher in a miracle, too. Amen.