



"No Ordinary Sunday: Water Becomes Wine"

Second Sunday after Epiphany
8:15 and 11:00 a.m. Sunday January 17, 2016
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Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
Camp Hill, Pennsylvania

Isaiah 62:1-5; Psalm 36:5-10;
1 Corinthians 12:1-11; John 2:1-11

Grace and peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
Amen.

At the University of Chicago for four days in May hundreds of students participate in a campus wide scavenger hunt. Some of the teams involved in this are over one hundred students. Their job is to find over three hundred items. Known as the "Scav Hunt" these items often are quirky, strange, or seemingly impossible items to find. And the students must decipher cryptic clues to seek out all of these obscure items. In some cases they have to create all sorts of interesting things that the clues ask them to put together. And so they assemble these things from scrap wood or even discarded bathroom fixtures. Some of the clues or the items they must create are a "periodic coffee table. One clue had them trying to find a live breathing elephant. One clue led them to create a bust of Abraham Lincoln made out of pennies. I saw a picture of a suit of armor made out of sponges, that was kind of fun. Another clue led them to go to the Archdiocese of Chicago and take a picture with their chief exorcist. One team of clever physics students built a working nuclear reactor out of scrap metal and some parts from their physics lab. Yes, it actually works. . . a little scary.

The students take months to prepare for this. One student grew a beard for three months just in case there happened to be a clue that had to do with having a beard. He was lucky, that year there was; how many toothpicks can you put into a beard? Unfortunately for him however, one of the other team mates had an uncle that had been growing his beard for 30 years.

When I was a child I used to love the scavenger hunts that you have when you go over to somebody's birthday party, or perhaps in youth group. And to this day I enjoy watching the TV shows where people are trying to get sunken treasure or they are walking around with those metal detectors, or even the movies where they are following after treasure.

Today we have something of a treasure hunt as well, a scavenger hunt. The theologian and bishop and scholar on the Bible, NT. Wright, says that John's gospel is a planned kind of treasure hunt, with careful and sometimes cryptic clues laid before us. These clues are "signs," he calls them, and they are given to us in moments so that we can see them in faith. And what we see is the divine active, showing us Jesus, his love pouring out grace and mercy to each one of us. These clues, these actions demonstrate God's

intention for all humanity, a celebration of the coming kingdom of love bursting forth into our world and into our lives.

These signs are moments where heaven and earth intercept. They are not just fanciful stories of fiction, but proclaimed in the church as moments when God makes his purposes made known to his people and they point to a heavenly reality that can be received by faith.

And they are not very elaborate stories at all. Stories like a mother and a son and his friends attending a wedding reception. Now a wedding reception at the time of Jesus would be a day's long celebration in which the whole village would be invited and neighboring villages as well. It was a community celebration of love. At this celebration their concern why the open bar is running low, and this is more than just a social faux pas, this is a social disaster and would be considered a disgrace on the family of this married couple. A disgrace in which they would have to live with for the rest of their lives, and people might consider it too a bad sign, a bad omen for this newly married couple to run out of food and drink for their marriage feast.

But a mother's intuition knows that somehow, some way her son can fix the problem, and he does so by looking at what is around him. He see stone jugs, twenty, thirty gallons, ready, standing there. These things of stone would be used for water for purification, for that same marriage feast, for everyone to be able to wash their hands and wash their faces. But you have to follow the clues.

So what are you trying to find? What are you looking for here and now today? Are you able to see the clues all around us?

Whatever you may know about Jesus, this first miracle fits a pattern for his ministry. He replicates this over and over again. In a world of scarcity a need is met with overwhelming generosity of God toward God's people. When they didn't think they had wine, Jesus offers it to them. When people needed to be healed, he healed them. When teaching needed to be present among God's people, Jesus was there to share that teaching. This is nothing less than a little heaven on earth, or in other words as the evangelist says earlier in the first chapter, "*The Word became flesh and dwelled among us and we have seen his glory.*"

This is the kind of glory that Jesus brings to a different element of life. The party is never over, brothers and sisters. The heavenly feast of God's kingdom continues and is celebrated by the church wherever she gathers for word and sacrament - bread given, wine poured out, words spoken and prayed for the salvation of all.

These signs offer to you and to me life. Jesus' life. . . Jesus' death. . . Jesus' resurrection to eternal life. And in them we see the divine in the ordinary. We see Jesus in bread and in wine ready to be received by us. As Luther said, "*Just for us to open up our hands for meat.*"

Notice the clues to who Jesus is and what he is calling you to be and to do. It is in the very nature of God to give us these signs and to strengthen our faith, to inspire us to

greater love and serve. In God's presence, ordinary Sunday's, just like today, are extraordinary celebrations of God's grace.

Amen.

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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