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Hudson UMC
Lent 1A - 2026 - Jn 2 - Tell Me Something Good 2
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Prayer for Enlightenment

O Lord, we pray, that you speak in this place, in the calming of our minds and in the longing of our hearts, by the words of my lips, and in the thoughts we form.

Speak, Lord, for your servants listen. Amen.

Lent was originally a season for new converts to learn and prepare for their baptism on Easter. For 40-days, these soon-to-be baptized Christians studied what was central to Christianity.
So Lent was a time of preparation...Lent was a time of learning the core principles and practices of Christianity.

In preparation for this Lent, I thought carefully about this.

What is central to Jesus' life and ministry?

I think these are some core principles...

- radical welcome,
- love for neighbor,
- care for the vulnerable,
- nourishment for the hungry,
- nonviolence in the face of injustice.

So, at the heart of Jesus' teachings, I find liberation, love, mercy, and grace.

This is to be good news...great-good news for us all

Following Jesus leads to a richer, more expansive life, but it's not necessarily comfortable.

Jesus' ministry is sometimes described as "radical" which comes from the Latin word "radicalis," meaning "root" or "ground."

So the good news brings us back to our roots.

Studying Jesus...living out his teachings grounds us in who God created us to be.

But there is lots of bad news in our world.

Can we be "good news" people in an upside-down world?

YES! I believe we can be people of good news even in a world that is upside-down.

This Lent I want us to remember that the good news really is good news.

- It is joyful—like fine wine saved for celebration.
- It grows like a mustard seed.
- It smells like exotic perfume poured from an alabaster jar.
- It tastes like fresh homemade bread passed endlessly through a hungry crowd.
- It sounds like laughter.
- It feels like mercy.

Yes, the good news is alive in the world.

May this great-good news inspire us to take action in a world desperate to hear, see, and taste what is good.

John's Gospel doesn't begin with a temptation story. Instead, John opens Jesus' ministry with a wedding miracle. It may feel a bit lavish to start Lent with a wedding banquet...but the good news begins with JOY...This is indeed GOOD news!

Let's talk a little bit about "good news."

What is good news? How would you describe it?

Good news could be...

...A new grandchild

...winning the lottery

...moving into your dream home...your forever home

...learning that the cancer is in remission

These and other things can be good news.

In Greek times (even before Jesus), a good news messenger was called...(wait for it)...an evangelist.

These messengers ran to the city bringing good news.

It was often a joyous announcement of a military victory or something else positive.

These messengers (evangelists) brought tidings of triumph that brought freedom or safety to the city. They would run throughout the city shouting

GOOD NEWS...GOOD NEWS! The battle is won!

This was indeed good news to the citizens...they no longer feared becoming slaves to the victorious enemy.

According to legend, Pheidippides, a Greek messenger in 490 BC, ran some 25-miles from the battle of Marathon to Athens to announce the Greek victory over Persia. Pheidippides ran through the city shouting NIKE, NIKE, (that is, Victory, Victory!) GOOD NEWS, THE BATTLE IS WON. He then died of exhaustion. His famous run inspired the modern marathon race.

That's all well and good...but what about GOOD NEWS in the Biblical sense?

Let's dive into our story and see what we can learn about GOOD NEWS.

John does not begin the story of Jesus with a temptation story like all the other Gospels.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke all begin the story of Jesus ministry and mission with the story of Jesus being tempted in the desert.

But not John. In John, Jesus begins his ministry with a wedding miracle. Perhaps it feels a bit lavish to begin the season of Lent with a wedding banquet, the GOOD NEWS begins with joy! It can seem out of place for those of us accustomed to beginning Lent with the story of Jesus tempted in the wilderness.

But John tells a different story in his Gospel.

He begins the ministry and mission of Jesus with a wedding that has run out of wine.

I also note that Jesus' first miracle ("sign" in John) at a wedding feast away from the church. Jesus' ministry doesn't begin in the Temple or a synagogue, which was the center of religion at the time.

Once again, John tells a different story than the other Gospels.

Jesus is at the wedding in Cana. And the party is at the point where it will go one of two ways...people will either leave...or the party will move up to the next level.

Then, unexpectedly, the wine runs out.

This party is about to end on a sour note.

You know what they say: timing is everything. Whether it's telling a joke, making a dramatic entrance in a stage show, or popping the question, timing is everything. When the timing is right, people laugh at your joke, gasp at your entrance, or smile radiantly in response to your proposal. And when the timing is off, they are just as likely to gasp at your joke, smile at your entrance, or laugh at your proposal.

Yes, timing is everything.

Weddings seem especially prone to these kinds of mishaps.

- In one wedding the groom and the best man got to the church on time with the ring...but forgot the suit for the 6-year-old ring bearer.
- In another wedding the matron of honor had surgery recently and collapsed during the vows.
- I even know of one wedding where the pastor got the time for the wedding service wrong and showed up an hour late...YIKES!

That is what makes this wedding at Cana such a scene.

The timing goes all wrong. No, it's not that the bride or groom speaks out of turn; it's not that the presider arrives late or confuses the vows. It's just that the wine ran out too early.

When I think about it, that doesn't surprise me.

After all, John tells us that it's the third day of the wedding banquet. Most ancient wedding feasts ran for a week or so. But even 3-days means a lot of wine, and if it were a particularly thirsty bunch, I can very well imagine that they ran dry.

Now if it were us, we might whisper nervously to some friends and ask them to make a run to the local wine shop and pick up some more.

But in this time and place running out of wine too early isn't a little embarrassing, it's a disaster. Wine isn't just a social lubricant, it's a sign of the harvest, of God's abundance, of joy and gladness and hospitality.

And so when they run short on wine they run short on blessing.

Timing IS everything.

The wine has run out before the wedding has.

And it's a catastrophe.

To make matters worse, Jesus' mother doesn't seem to have much of a sense of timing either. At least that's what Jesus seems to think.

"They have no wine," she says to her son.

Now, we don't know whether she was close to the families of the bride and groom and so eager to help, or whether she just was particularly sensitive to this kind of social *faux pas*.

What we do know is that she expected her son to do something about it.

But Jesus seems to think this is another instance of bad timing: "Woman," he responds, taking an oddly formal tone with his mother. "Woman, what concern is that to you or me? My hour – my *time* – has not yet come."

But Mary knows better. Rather than raise an eyebrow at his tone or offer a counterpoint to him, she turns to the servants and tells them simply and clearly, "Do whatever he tells you."

Now it could be that, like a good Jewish mother, Mary knew her son would come around.

He might protest, but eventually he'll listen to his mother.

Or it could be that Mary knew how to tell time better than Jesus thought.

She was, after all, the one who brought him into the world, the one who suckled him as a babe and watched him grow, and followed him when he became an adult. And so perhaps we shouldn't be surprised if Mary recognized that whenever her son was on the scene, it was no ordinary time.

Well, you know the rest of the story. Jesus instructs the servants to fill six large stone basins with water and to draw some of that water, now turned to wine, and take it to the steward.

Once again timing is an issue. Most hosts, you see, serve the best wine up front, wanting to make a good impression, and save the cheap wine for later, when the palettes of the guests have been, shall we say, sufficiently dulled so as to not recognize the drop in quality.

But this host, the steward assumes, has bucked the traditional timing and saved the best wine for last. And suddenly this couple has six huge stone jars – something like 1000 bottles! – of fantastic wine, more than enough for even three more days.

No one will leave this wedding thirsty, for abundance and blessing overflow.

So what is the message of this story.

I wonder if one of the messages of this story at the start of John tells us that Jesus is promising us that the rewards will flow abundantly beyond anything we could imagine.

Jesus at the wedding feast turns the water of anxiety is turned into the wine of ridiculously abundant blessing, so extravagant that it feels irresponsible and scandalous.

- Is there enough?
- Will there be enough?
- Am I enough?
- Can anything be enough?

Come and see, says Jesus with a laugh.

If you trust me enough to give yourself to me for life, to follow me with wholehearted commitment, you will see how rich and deep we can go.

Fill these stone jars with your anxieties, with your fears of NOT ENOUGH.

Fill them to the brim.

Now draw some out, and take it to the feast master.

And right here, today, you will know enough

...enough

...far more than enough

...outrageously more than enough.

Right here with the rich wine of God's love, let the celebration begin.

This is good news.

This is GREAT-good news!

If the good news of our Ash Wednesday scripture is: "there is still room for more....", then I think the good news of this Sunday's scripture is: "there is still more...more than enough, the best has been saved for the last."

Thanks be to God.

Amen.