

SESSION 2 – God’s Economy of Abundance - Water into Wine John 2:1-12 (Skipping Jesus turning over tables in the temple John 2:13-25) This water into wine” sign” is the inaugural event of Jesus Ministry according to the writer of John

While important - the turning over of the tables in the temple (John 2:13-25) is also found in the synoptics and has roughly the same connotations attached to it. Who gave you this authority to disrupt the daily actions of the officials in the Temple? By doing this action Jesus threw everything into disarray and called the Temple up short on its abuse of the economic system of the time. There is one important difference in John’s Gospel as opposed to the synoptics and that is that the synoptics all have it toward the end of their narrative and it was the last straw that led to Jesus death by the officials. John has this story situated at the beginning of the writing as if to say here we go...This whole exchange can be a challenge to institutionalism everywhere in any time and how it can become abusive.

You also may have noticed that we did not address the rest of Chapter 1 last week where we get the calling of the disciples – While there is also some important stuff there, I am focusing in on mostly Johannine narrative things that are key to the Gospel. Plus we would never get through it because there is so much there – but as you read through if there is something that is not addressed that hits you between the eyes be sure to email those thoughts to me at theologyjeff@mail.com and I will try my best to address them at the beginning of each weeks session notes

Now onto John 2:1-12 (Water into Wine)

If you took all the best mothers and fathers who ever lived (think about that for a moment) – all the goodness, kindness, patience, fidelity, wisdom, tenderness, strength and love – and united all those virtues in one person, that person would only be a faint shadow of the love and mercy in the heart of God for you and me – Brennan Manning

Read text – John 2:1-12

Questions from the reading? Email me at theologyjeff@gmail.com with any and I will do my best to answer them at the beginning of the Session 3 notes. Okay now I have mentioned the email twice so you should have it 😊

- Chapter 2 begins with the words - On the third day – Begs the question 3rd from what?
 - According to the chronology of John it was the third day since Jesus was baptized John 1:29, 35, 43 – John does not narrate Jesus’ Baptism only hints at it second hand
 - Foreshadowing of cross event – which is –
 - A movement from death to life
 - Incarnate word transforms lives and events according to God’s abundant economy
- First sign (Not Miracle) In John there are no miracles only “SIGNS”
 - An example of God’s abundance
 - A foretaste of the feast to come language (very Eucharistic actually) Bread in John 6:1-15

- Isaiah 25:6ff/John 10:10 (The thief comes that they may steal and kill – I came that they may have life and have it abundantly – Wine is generally a biblical symbol of the fruits of God’s kingdom fulfilled Amos 9:13/Joel 3:18 In other words - Jesus is the extravagant love of God!! And good wine is the symbol of that extravagance!
- Turns water that was meant for the “Jewish rites of purification” and turns it into **gallons and gallons** of wine
- Steward represents the normal order of things and is surprised when that order is out of control

-Too often we live in **fear** of not having enough. We live as though “**scarcity**” not “**abundance**” is God’s design!! We assume limited resources which makes it difficult for us to share with one another

-We argue over whether the jar is half empty or half full – THIS TEXT CHALLENGES OUR ASSUMPTIONS OF A LIMITED ECONOMY AND FORCES US TO LOOK AT WHAT GOD’S ECONOMY LOOKS LIKE!! AND THEN PUSHES US TO BE STEWARDS OF ALL THAT THE EARTH OFFERS FOR EVERYONE!

-Theologically this is a concept called “realized eschatology” In other words the kingdom is here now - Jesus uses the phrase my hour has **not come yet** basically – **But then** God’s preferred future is made real in the **present** through Jesus and this action makes the kingdom real now at the wedding.

-Fear is the opposite of faith – fear makes us discriminate against anything and anyone and do horrendous things to anything and everyone – Exodus 1 – Pharaoh/Egypt feared and so kill all the boys etc. Herod feared and so “kill” all the first-born boys etc. Does not take long to prove this point biblically, and in history, and today, and we participate fully in this fear, even though we should know better. And we will continue to behave in fear in the future but God says to us that is not my way! MY WAY is water to wine!

Gregg Knepp tells a story in his book of a neighborhood community center that rose out of the ashes of destruction in the impoverished Pimlico neighborhood in which he served as an example of water being turned to wine.

Reflection Questions

Have you or your family ever experienced a time when you did not have enough (food –clothing-housing-money). How did you handle that situation? How did it turn out?

List things you currently have in abundance in your life? (Family-friends-health-financial resources-clothes-faith-life experiences etc.)

As you pray, be conscious of beginning each prayer time with offering “thanks” to God for any abundant blessings in your life.

Are there things that you have “too much of” in your life and would like to get rid of? If so, what is it? How can having “too much” of something become a burden rather than a blessing?

What small step can you take today to remove some of the excess accumulation in your life?

And how does this line of questioning square with the prosperity gospel which does say God will richly bless you/us and this text does back that up kind of?

Do you tithe (give ten percent of your income) to your congregation or other charitable organizations? Why or why not?

In what ways do you give of your time and talents to your congregation or other charitable organizations?

Questions for congregational leaders

What need exists in your local community which seems too big to be addressed by the resources available?

How could you imagine a cooperative effort with other congregations, non-profit organizations, social organizations (Lions Club, Rotary etc.) or business in your community?

What would be required to overcome barriers to establishing a coordinated effort? Communication? Education? Dedicated staff time?

What collaborative efforts already exist in your community? How did they come into being? What can be learned from those efforts?

Running out of wine would have been considered a social disgrace. Does your congregation view the prevalence of unmet needs in the neighborhood as a social disgrace? What biblical stories, verses etc. can one use to support the idea of addressing unmet needs with God's abundance?

The Wedding at Cana story can be evidenced in the Community Arts center in Pimlico where Gods abundant gallons of wine arose from water! This is also very baptismal imagery for us to consider. Can you think of an example or story from your own congregational life or community where this “sign” has been present?