

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER

January 19, 2025



PRUDENCE

is not as virtuous as generosity

by Drew Downs

In the telling of the wedding feast at Cana, we learn of a common practice of serving the good wine first, then the cheap stuff after people are drunk. There is a common wisdom to this, I suspect. I heard the same thing in college when people were pinching pennies, but still splurging on alcohol.

This story offers a twist to this dynamic, however. Jesus flips the script and makes a better wine after the host has run out of

the stuff he's offering his guests. Jesus makes the host look good because, in the midst of their joy, the guests have something greater to enjoy! In our own penny-conscious culture, such generosity is unheard of, transgressive even. We so often want economic prudence to be virtuous, even to the point of enforcing suffering on the poor to show a supposed virtue there. But here, virtue is shown in generosity, in offering people more than they need, without fear of running out.

AFTER THE EPIPHANY

2025

WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

Disciples, Apostles, and Saints!

Into 2025

Each year, we gather as a congregation for a meeting that includes everyone. We call it simply, *the Annual Meeting*, which, frankly, is a little on-the-nose if you ask me.

We are obligated by canons of the church and by state and federal law to have a congregational meeting at least once per year. We don't need to *only* have one meeting annually, just that we must endeavor to do so *no less* than annually. In this way, I might suggest we refer to it as the congregational meeting rather than our annual meeting.

At this meeting, we elect vestry members and delegates to convention, get an accounting of the year that was and of the year ahead through ministry reports, presentation of the budget, and a rector's address. The rest of the year, the work of the congregation is delegated to the vestry and the rector.

We will gather Sunday **January 19th** for our budget presentation after the 10:00 service. This is our opportunity to dive into the budget for next year with more room for conversation. Then we gather the following Sunday, **January 26th at 11:30 am** for our congregational meeting.

This will be a pivotal year for St. Stephen's and we have so much to look forward to: new opportunities for exploring our stories, a summer filled with creativity and projects, and a fall of celebrating. There is much to look forward to and joy to behold in all of it.

With love,
Drew

AFTER THE EPIPHANY

2025

FOR SUNDAY

Epiphany 2C

January 19, 2025

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

John 2:1-11

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, "Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward." So they took it. 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." Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

AFTER THE EPIPHANY

Reflection

For the second Sunday after the Epiphany, we read about the famous wedding at Cana, where Jesus performs his first miracle. This, however, isn't the first thing Jesus does in the gospel, nor is it the first thing he does after his baptism. What he does then is recruit disciples.

This moment is some time later, after Jesus has recruited Andrew and Simon Peter, James, John, Philip, and Nathanael. It is these six, and perhaps more that attend the wedding with Jesus and his mother — a suggestion I can't fully comprehend in our invited +1 world. The host is paying per plate for dinner, after all. It would be rude, even for a rabbi to bring his disciples with him. Rude in the post-Emily Post world. Probably not so rude then.

But then again, they do run out of wine, don't they? That seems like a vote for keeping the guest list tight. Notice how this line of thinking puts us in sympathy with the host primarily? How his status and resources are *our* concern? The gospel is not concerned with his resources in that way. It doesn't make the host out to be the victim at all. In fact, he is treated like a cheapskate, trying to short the people on wine. He is neither prepared to properly serve his guests nor inclined to spend on them.

The miracle Jesus invokes is fascinating, then. Because he helps the host save face with his affluent guests while exposing his cheapness to the servants and the disciples. There is a clear class distinction offered by the text here, for the purpose of revealing Jesus's mission to the people who are most helped by it.

In **our** witnessing of the miracle, we see this distinction and perhaps a different way of hosting others. That the purpose of hosting is to be generous — always — and to treat each person as worthy of the best stuff we can find.

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