



The readings for this week in the Lectionary carry themes of love, caring, marriage, and the gifts that are always given when love is present. The possibilities for exploring how Jesus is revealed in love, and in us when we love, are very exciting.

May our worship lead us deeper into God's unfailing love, and may it transform us, that little bit more, into generous, self-giving lovers.

### **INTRODUCTIONS**

***For use by lectors, in order of service, parish bulletins and magazines***

#### **Isaiah 62 : 1-5**

Today's Gospel tells us of Jesus at a wedding; ancient poems sang of God becoming a bridegroom to his people, and giving them a new name. Listen as Isaiah delights in what the Lord will do.

#### **Psalm 36 : 5 - 10**

A song of celebration for God's unfailing love and care which includes all humanity and all of creation.

#### **1 Corinthians 12 : 1-11**

We begin today a series of readings from this letter, in which Paul teaches the Corinthian Christians about the gifts bestowed on us by the Holy Spirit. They are so various that not one of us can say we have no holy gift.

#### **John 2 : 1-11**

In the Gospel of John, the miracles of Jesus are signs - of who he is and therefore what God is like. The first sign is almost unnoticed. At a village wedding among his family and friends Jesus made extravagant quantities of water into the finest wine. The ordinary becomes the extraordinary.

### **TEXT OF READINGS**

[http://bible.oremus.org/?show\\_adj=no&passages=Isaiah%2062:1-5%0Acw%20Psalm%2036:%205-10%0A1%20Corinthians%2012:%201-11%0AJohn%202:%201-11](http://bible.oremus.org/?show_adj=no&passages=Isaiah%2062:1-5%0Acw%20Psalm%2036:%205-10%0A1%20Corinthians%2012:%201-11%0AJohn%202:%201-11)

## The Second Sunday after the Epiphany YEAR C January 17, 2016

### COLLECTS OF THE DAY

#### Collect One

Almighty and everlasting God,  
who dost govern all things in heaven and earth;  
Mercifully hear the supplications of thy people,  
and grant us thy peace all the days of our life;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

#### Collect Two

Almighty God,  
in Christ you make all things new:  
Transform the poverty of our nature  
by the riches of your grace,  
and in the renewal of our lives  
make known your heavenly glory;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

### PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 1

In peace let us pray to the Lord. Lord, have mercy.  
For glad and joyful hearts, receiving the blessings of God with thanksgiving and using them wisely and for the glory of the Lord, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mercy.**

For pregnant women, for the protection and care of the life in their womb and for the blessing of God upon husband, children and home; for the aged, the infirm, the widowed and the orphaned, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mercy.**

For those troubled in spirit and those whose hearts despair of the troubles and trials of this mortal life; for the sick, the suffering, the grieving and the dying, [*especially* \_\_\_\_\_], let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mercy.**

For the Church, the community of faith whom God has established by the blood of Christ, that all our leaders and those who serve us in Christ's name may be blessed in their service and their work prospered as God wills, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mercy.**

For this nation and those who make, administer and judge our laws; for the causes of peace and justice, here and throughout the world; for those in the armed forces who protect and defend us against our enemies; for laws that are good and just and for judges who are wise and faithful, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mercy.**

For the tithes and offerings we bring as part of our worship and symbols of our faith and trust; for our sharing this day in the body and blood of Christ; for lives of faith and repentance, renewed by the divine Spirit that we might live to God's glory, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mercy.**

For the grace of life and the courage to live the new and holy calling into which we have been baptized; for the faith to trust in the good and gracious will of our heavenly Father, who has promised to hear and answer His people's prayers, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mercy.**

Remembering the faithful who have gone before us and renewing our commitment to

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leave to those who follow us a legacy of truth and faithfulness, let us pray to the Lord.  
**Lord, have mercy.**

Into Your hands, O Lord, we command all for whom we pray, trusting in Your mercy, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. **Amen.**

### PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 2

God is our light and our salvation. Together let us pray, saying, "Lord in your mercy," and respond, "hear our prayer."

For all bishops and clergy, that as a community of disciples, they might bring light to the nations. Lord in your mercy, **C: Hear our prayer.**

For the world, that the light of Christ might dispel slander and wickedness, bringing new life to broken relationships. Lord in your mercy, **C: Hear our prayer.**

For the poor of the world, that they might be recognised as children of God. Lord in your mercy, **C: Hear our prayer.**

For our congregation, that the celebration of Holy Communion might bring us new life every Lord's Day. Lord in your mercy, **C: Hear our prayer.**

For the newly baptised, especially \_\_\_\_\_, that they might bring renewal and a spirit of new life to the church. Lord in your mercy, **C: Hear our prayer.**

That fear and self-centredness might disappear from the lives of all who are baptised, and that fervent concern for neighbour might blossom. Lord in your mercy, **C: Hear our prayer.**

God of all nations, in Christ light and salvation have come to earth. Hear our prayers and guide our lives, that Christ may also be manifest in us. **Amen.**

### POST COMMUNION

God of glory,  
you nourish us with bread from heaven.  
Fill us with your Holy Spirit  
that through us the light of your glory  
may shine in all the world.  
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

### PRAYERS

Perfect Light of revelation,  
as you shone in the life of Jesus,  
whose epiphany we celebrate,  
so shine in us and through us,  
that we may become beacons of truth and compassion,  
enlightening all creation with deeds of justice and mercy. Amen.

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O God,  
you spoke your word  
and revealed your good news in Jesus, the Christ.  
Fill all creation with that word again,  
so that by proclaiming your joyful promises to all nations  
and singing of your glorious hope to all peoples,  
we may become one living body,  
your incarnate presence on the earth. Amen.

To God who welcomes all in love,  
let us pray for the good of the church  
and the concerns of those in need.

### *Intercessions*

God of every land and nation,  
you have created all people  
and you dwell among us in Jesus Christ.  
Listen to the cries of those who pray to you,  
and grant that, as we proclaim the greatness of your name,  
all people will know the power of love at work in the world.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sisters and brothers,  
let us lift our hearts in faith  
to the one who hears all prayers  
and holds close all those in need.

### *Intercessions*

Holy God, you gather the whole universe  
into your radiant presence  
and continually reveal your Son as our Savior.  
Bring healing to all wounds,  
make whole all that is broken,  
speak truth to all illusion,  
and shed light in every darkness,  
that all creation will see your glory and know your Christ. Amen.

O God of steadfast love,  
at the wedding in Cana  
your Son Jesus turned water into wine,  
delighting all who were there.  
Transform our hearts by your Spirit,  
that we may use our varied gifts  
to show forth the light of your love  
as one body in Christ. Amen.

## LECTIONARY NOTES 1

### ***Isaiah 62:1-5:***

- Again, this passage speaks in hopefulness of the joy that will come when the people are freed from captivity and return to home from Babylon. How do we retain hope after such a long time when nothing is changing?

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- "You shall no longer be termed Forsaken." These words strike me as particularly comforting to one who has decided to turn to God after a time of struggle, or in the midst of struggle. God does not forsake us!
- The imagery of marriage in the scriptures, such as in verses 4-5 here, is a struggle today because the way marriage is portrayed is usually so male-centered and patriarchally slanted. God is portrayed as the ultimate man, ready to take us as the lovely bride, made special by being chosen by the groom. We have to be careful to extract the meaning of the passage without walking away with the baggage of these marriage stereotypes too.

### **Psalm 36:5-10:**

- The first part of this Psalm, which is not part of the lectionary passage, talks about evil doers, how they reject good, and reject God.
- The second part, this Sunday's passage, is very pretty. The focus is on God, and God's attributes related to faithfulness: steadfast love, faithfulness, righteousness, judgments.
- This psalm has some intriguing imagery. v. 6b says, "you save human and animals alike, O Lord." What does that mean, exactly? I'm really not sure, but my vegetarian soul has hope!
- "All people may take refuge in the shadow of your wings." Emphasis mine. Comfort! Do we believe that? Live that?
- V. 9 - "For with you is the fountain of life". Not the fountain of youth, but the fountain of life from which we draw is in itself enough to call for our thanks to God.

### **1 Corinthians 12:1-11:**

- This passage, and the following week's passage from Corinthians, are great passages for congregations. No matter how many times we say that everyone has a ministry, a call to follow from God, it seems our congregants don't really believe that God means *them*. We will be using these two weeks to do a spiritual gifts inventory in our congregation, or at least spring off from these two weeks of texts. How can we get people to believe that God has blessed, gifted, and called *them*?
- The hymn "Many Gifts, One Spirit" is perfect for this occasion, and will bring the message home. Some lyrics: "In our difference is blessing, from diversity we praise One Giver, One Lord, One Spirit, One Word, known in many ways, hallowing our days. For the giver, for the gifts, praise, praise, praise!"
- Speaking in tongues, interpreting tongues. I can't help but feel that most modern-day incarnations of speaking in tongues miss the mark somewhat. After all, the beauty of the speaking in tongues recorded in Acts 2 was that everyone could understand the good news in their own language, not that no one could understand anything at all...

### **John 2:1-11:**

- This passage is usually considered Jesus' first miracle. Interestingly, opponents of same-sex union also call Jesus' attendance at a wedding his endorsement of marriage as between a man and a woman. I don't find that a very strong argument, personally.
- "And they filled them up to the brim." I still vividly remember a sermon I heard from a pastor in Delaware, OH, where I attended [undergrad](#), on this passage. She spoke about the manifestation of gifts in our lives. That we were filled, by God, with gifts and blessing, to the very brim. Perhaps today we can picture the ads they play for fast food or movie theatre drinks, where they show the fizzing soda just barely

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stopping in time to not go over the edge of the glass. This is how full God makes our lives!

- V. 10 - "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." Many focus on the miracle itself as the point of this passage, but I am caught up in this verse here. Isn't this how God intervenes in our lives? Isn't this how God acts in history? Blessing upon blessing - we don't use up God's love and blessings in childhood - God walks with us for our whole journey, often saving some of the best to last. God doesn't want to cheat us out of any of the goodness of life, but let us experience it all fully, all of our days.

### LECTIONARY NOTES

2

#### **REFLECTIONS ON THEME:**

God's love for God's people, and God's commitment to care for all of humanity are described and celebrated throughout the Scriptures. Many of the readings for this week draw on the wedding metaphor – the celebration of Jerusalem like a groom who rejoices over his bride; the song of a God who loves unflinchingly; the first sign of John's Gospel, performed at the wedding feast. In the midst of all of these images is the truth that Paul describes in his letter to Corinthians – love always delights to give gifts to its beloved. As has been famously stated: "You can give without loving, but you cannot love without giving." What this week in Epiphany seeks to show us is the complete, unconditional, self-giving love of God revealed in Jesus, but also the warning – the extent of our following Christ in the way of love is revealed by the extent of our giving. No giving, no love!

#### **CONNECTING WITH LIFE:**

**GLOBAL APPLICATION:** The central culture in the world of human affairs has evolved as one of getting and consuming. Of course, as will have recently been preached around the world, Christmas reveals this clearly and disturbingly. And the cost we have paid has been deeply felt in the last years. However, as Christ revealed in his life and teachings, the 'culture' of God's reign is one of giving, sharing and preserving. Only by allowing this 'Christ-culture' to permeate our lives and world can we ever hope to address the great crises of our time – poverty, human trafficking, dread diseases, terrorism and war, and climate change. Imagine the difference if nations sought ways to give to one another, rather than exploit; if organisations sought to do well only by doing good; and if individuals learned that love for our neighbours is expressed through giving of time, resources, compassion and energy. While it may seem naive and sentimental to say so, the truth is that many of the world's problems need the approach of love to address them. We need to learn to love our political, religious, international, and economic rivals. We need to learn to love our co-workers, our collaborators and our supporters. We need to learn to love those for whom we work for justice. And we need to learn to love our planet. This is not a sentimental, fickle, "feeling", but a commitment to seek the best for the other, to honour their humanity, their God-createdness, and their right to life. The Christlike kind of love is a choice, made daily, to live in ways that contribute to the well-being of others and of our planet in whatever way we can. This is the call this week.

**LOCAL APPLICATION:** Every week in our churches an offering is received "for the work of God". The Gospel question that we must face is this: How much of this offering is used to give to those who most need it – to uplift the surrounding community or to make some small contribution toward addressing the world's crises – and how much is used to benefit only the church which receives it? All too often the message we send as Church is that our

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giving to God is much like paying taxes – not a gift of love, but a burden to be avoided or at least mitigated, as much as possible. Yet, as we allow the season of Epiphany to reveal to us again the Christ who died for love of us, we cannot help but recognise that our poverty in giving is a reflection of the poverty of our love. This applies not just to churches, or to the financial gifts that are given. It also applies to our families, neighbourhoods and communities, and to the way we hoard our time, our energy, our true selves, and our spiritual gifts. As we learn to live the loving way of Christ, we cannot help but become freer with ourselves, making our resources, abilities and time available to others, and opening ourselves up in such a way that we make ourselves a gift to those with whom we have strong and deep relationships. May the revealed Christ teach us to love truly – practically, sacrificially, generously, extravagantly.

### SERMON OUTLINE

#### **John 2:1-12: there was a wedding in Cana...**

A wedding is always a great occasion – especially in the East in Jesus' time – given the general poverty of the peasantry. It lifted the hearts of villagers as they joined in the festivity of the occasion – lasted a week – no honeymoon – the feast preceded the ceremony - *the mother of Jesus was there.* <sup>2</sup>*Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding* – a great day for everyone in the village...

**1. In Cana:** a small town to the north of Nazareth set amid the Galilean hills – home of Nathanael...

**2. In Conversation:** as the wedding party continues, imagine the buzz of conversation – then consternation about a pending problem - <sup>3</sup>*When the wine gave out...* – embarrassment for the family & shame for the couple – given the custom of hospitality.

**3. In Confidence:** note the total confidence Mary has in her son - <sup>5</sup>*His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.'* – have we the same confidence as we trust in him? Do you in your daily life *'Do whatever he tells you.'*

**4. In Control:** Jesus is totally in control of the situation & saves the day.. Nearby were 6 stone water jars - <sup>7</sup>*Jesus said 'Fill the jars with water.'* – *20-30 gallons each... Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.'* Amazingly it was the finest of wine – as the steward declares: *'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.'* Water was turned into wine – dilemma into delight! Jesus changes the ordinary into something special – still does in our lives... Trust him!

- By Norman Porteous

### ONLINE SERMON SOURCES

**The first sign** - Rockies net - scroll down

<http://www.rockies.net/~spirit/sermons/c-or02su.php>

**Goose Sense** - I Corinthians 12:1-11 Rev. Richard J. Fairchild - Rockies net - scroll down

<http://www.rockies.net/~spirit/sermons/c-or02se.php>

**Wedding at Cana** - Sermons that work - Episcopal Church

[http://archive.episcopalchurch.org/sermons\\_that\\_work\\_118184\\_ENG\\_HTM.htm](http://archive.episcopalchurch.org/sermons_that_work_118184_ENG_HTM.htm)

**Finding Wild Space** - the Rev. Anne Sutherland Howard, Day 1

[www.churchnewsireland.org](http://www.churchnewsireland.org)

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[http://day1.org/1679-finding\\_wild\\_space](http://day1.org/1679-finding_wild_space)

### CHILDREN

**The miracle of transformation** - Rockies net - scroll down

<http://www.rockies.net/~spirit/sermons/c-or02su.php>

**Sermon of the Week**, - Sermons 4 Kids,

<http://www.sermons4kids.com/>

### HYMN SUGGESTIONS

[This Is My Father's World](#)

[The Church's One Foundation](#)

[In Christ There Is No East Nor West](#)

[Come And Let Us Sweetly Join](#)

[Best For Last](#)

[Love](#)

[I Stand In Awe](#)

[Unfailing Love](#)

[May The Words Of My Mouth](#)

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