

Sharing the Abundance

By: Tom Schoenherr

January 17, 2016. Guest pastor Tom Schoenherr preaches on the story of the wedding at Cana from the Gospel of John, in which Jesus turns water into wine when the wine gives out. We too can share God's abundance with others when health, faith, or trust in God give out.

*** Transcript ***

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

Weddings. Weddings are places where the hopes and dreams of many people come together. Weddings are also events where things can go wrong. I presided at a wedding where the bride chose to be late because that's what she normally did. The rings didn't show up. The candles didn't get lit. At this particular wedding at Cana, we are told the wine gave out. In the Greek, that word is lack. So it was lacking. It was finished. There wasn't any more wine. And in that particular time, the wedding reception would last about seven days. So if they're in about the third day, they have a long way to go. And I always struggle with this text. It doesn't mean that everybody should get drunk at weddings, please, nor the bar be open forever. The bar was closed. It was an embarrassment to the family, and I'm sure to the couple. They may not have had very much of their own. So Jesus does something special there. But the wine gave out. It wasn't a life-threatening thing that happened, but Jesus did it for what I said before: the purpose of showing us what abundance God's grace is.

I know at our wedding patience gave out. The patience of our fathers in particular. The guys in the wedding party thought it would be fun to take my wife and kidnap her. And so they drove away with her, leaving me at the reception alone. An hour later when they showed up, having gotten lost, my father and Barb's father were there meeting them at the door. It was not a pleasant experience. Those guys in the wedding party still apologize every time they see us. So patience can give out. All kinds of things give out in our lives: health, friends and family who are no longer with us. There can be, as we are also focused upon Martin Luther King, Jr. this weekend, a giving out of a desire to live together as different races and cultures, in harmony and peace. We can even reach that point, where as we see these things giving out in our lives, whatever they may be -- health being one of them -- that we may get the feeling of helplessness. We want to fix it. We want to make things better. We want to work hard in order to make everything turn out right. And that helplessness can lead to panic at times.

Finally, the thing that is giving out for us is the giving out of our faith and trust in God. We wonder where is God? Like in the Isaiah text, has God really abandoned us? Does he no longer understand that all kinds of things are giving out in our lives? And where is God? Why isn't God showing up? There's a feeling, even among those presidential hopefuls that are traveling around the country these days, that there is the scarcity. There's all kinds of things giving out, like money, like security, like jobs. And so as we look at our society today, we're thinking wow, everything is giving out. What are we going to do?

Mary comes to Jesus and says they have no wine. She is aware that that has given out as well, and she believes that Jesus is the one who can help. But as long as we continue to focus upon that which is giving out and our own ability to make it better and fix it, then we can cut ourselves off from that grace of God that we need so desperately. And we are left with no wine. And only in our fear. And fear seems to be a great commodity these days, fear and suspicion. We see it everywhere we look. Jesus doesn't give up on the people at Cana, and he doesn't abandon us as well, in our deeper need. For in response to

his mother's saying they have no wine, Jesus says, "My hour has not yet come." But when Jesus' hour does come, then Jesus' life will be given out. Poured out for you and me, that we may have life abundantly, that we may know the promise of a God who comes to enter into the very real problems of our lives where things keep running out, giving out. It is in that Lord Jesus Christ that we have the abundance of God's grace, grace upon grace that gives us new life and hope. That grace never runs out, never gives out. It continues to flow and be abundant in our lives always.

And again, Jesus invites us to the table again today, where he is the host. And he is the one who stands with us in the midst of our pains and our struggles, our fears, our suspicions, in order that he might take them all on himself and return to us the abundance of his love, the abundance of his forgiveness and healing. In Jesus Christ, there is hope for us. Everything doesn't have to, as it all is eventually running out. We know that in Jesus Christ there is a new age, a new one who holds onto us that we can hold onto in our time of struggle and need. And he also fills us with that promise and that spirit, in sending us out to be the people of God in the world, to share that abundance of love and life and joy with everyone.

And I wonder what could it be this week that you might do that would show the abundance of God's grace? Students going to Guatemala, certainly a way in which that grace of God, that love of God is shown to people as we sit and listen with them. But what does it take? What could we do? You might think about that. It could be a smile. There are lots of people walking around with frowns these days, but that smile might be a way to connect with someone about the grace of God. To sit and listen to someone, and just give your time. To be patient with someone. God's abundance of grace and love counters the abundance of fear, and of the giving out of everything that seems to be so dear to us in our lives. I wonder if Jesus had a dream that day. A dream that there would be that time when all of God's people would be drawn together to live in harmony. A dream that there would be enough for everyone so that all people could thrive and survive. A dream that all races and cultures might be able to live together in peace.

We have been gifted with the abundance of God's grace and love, and we are sent in order that we might be that presence of God, that presence of joy, that presence of abundance of God's grace for all of God's people. May we be filled with that spirit of new life and hope for all the world. In Jesus' name, amen.

*** Keywords ***

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