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Prayer: 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.

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

12:1 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed.

12:2 You know that when you were pagans, you were enticed and led astray to idols that could not speak.

12:3 Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says "Let Jesus be cursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit.

12:4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit;

12:5 and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord;

12:6 and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone.

12:7 To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

12:8 To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit,

12:9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit,

12:10 to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.

12:11 All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.

John 2:1-11

2:1 On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there.

2:2 Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding.

2:3 When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine."

2:4 And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come."

2:5 His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

2:6 Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons.

2:7 Jesus said to them, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim.

2:8 He said to them, "Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward." So they took it.

2:9 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

2:10 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."

2:11 Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

Proclamation of the Word

Maybe you have seen the greeting card where a pastor has been pulled over by a policeman, who asks "Have you been drinking?"

"Just water, officer" is his reply.

The cop asks "Then why do I smell wine?"

The pastor: "Good Lord, he's done it again!"

When I read this Scripture I thought of the towel someone gave us at Christmas which reads, "I'll celebrate anyone who can turn water into wine."

It feels good to laugh, to experience joy. Some may think such jokes are irreverent, but I think when we laugh, we are closer to God than ever.

Can't you just picture God creating the world and laughing
as he flung stars across the night sky,
as he bent down, scooped up some dirt, and molded man and woman,
grinning as he shaped ears and little toes,
as he created the sloth, the hyena, the Giraffe!

We hear a lot about Joy lately.

Dabo repeated what those of us who have belonged to FCA heard over the years-
JOY is about having our priorities straight: Jesus, Others, Yourself.

Or maybe you found that new show on Netflix, *Tidying Up with Marie Kondo*.

Marie Kondo is the latest guru of neatness and home organization.

She helps people get rid of stuff and find peace.

And when considering whether to keep or toss out something the question is, "Does it spark joy?"

Joy is sometimes about clearing out the clutter, setting priorities, and focusing on what matters the most.

Today's gospel reading is full of joy.

Jesus is doing so much more than helping his hosts save face by turning the water into wine.

Jesus reveals the truth of God's abundant, life giving blessings.

120 gallons of wine is over the top!

Jesus reveals that on this third day and another one coming after the cross, he himself is the Way, the Truth, and the Life...through him we have resurrection joy.

The wedding at Cana is just a foretaste of the resurrection that was coming.

But here only a few get to know that.

What I wonder is why did only the disciples get to see that it was Jesus who did it?

Why are only the servants the ones to see?

Not everybody gets it.

When I think of someone who gets God's abundant, overflowing grace,

I think of the poet Mary Oliver.

Mary Oliver, an American poet, died Thursday at age 83.

She saw God's goodness around her in the good Creation.

She helped us see it, too.

And seeing is believing.

She wrote about death:

When it's over, I want to say: all my life
I was a bride married to amazement.
I was the bridegroom, taking the world into my arms.

When it's over, I don't want to wonder
if I have made of my life something particular, and real.
I don't want to find myself sighing and frightened,
or full of argument.

I don't want to end up simply having visited this world.ⁱ

She more than visited, she was a bride married to amazement!
She lapped it up like a kitten laps up warm milk.
She helped us see God's fingerprints on the grasshopper and in the sunset.
God's great abundance is everywhere in the world.
And sometimes only a few notice or get to see it.

As poet Gerard Manley Hopkins, wrote, "The world is charged with grandeur of God."ⁱⁱ

Or as Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote,
Earth's crammed with heaven,
And every common bush afire with God,
But only he who sees takes off his shoes;
The rest sit round and pluck blackberries."ⁱⁱⁱ

Not all see it and not all give God the glory.

Not all will come to acknowledge Christ until the end of all things when "every knee will bow and all tongues confess that Jesus is Lord," as Paul writes in Philippians 2.

Sadly, they will miss the source of all new life, resurrection, and the joy of here and now. "only he who sees takes off his shoes."

Scholar Scott Hoezee writes about a friend who is one of the best chefs in the United States (and has been so acclaimed by people who know what they are talking about). He writes,

The celebrity chefs on Food Network notwithstanding, most chefs tend to be introverts...[my friend would] rather stay in the background than be center stage with a spotlight shining on him. But like most chefs, the one thing that brings my friend joy is seeing others enjoy his food. More than once when eating in his restaurant, I have seen him standing in the shadows near the kitchen, watching people delight in his culinary creations, and beaming in happiness at seeing the diners' enjoyment. Most will never shake hands with my friend. Most will never bother to seek him out to say "Thank You" or send a letter of appreciation to the restaurant at some later point. Nor does my friend stroll through the dining room tacitly and subtly soliciting praise. He's mostly content to look upon people's delight from afar.

I wonder if God is not accustomed to this as well. At Cana, Jesus watched people enjoy an outstanding wine whose origin most people never learned (and maybe would not have believed even had they been told). And if people did not thank him, it was nothing new. As Augustine first observed—and as C.S. Lewis later enjoyed pondering—what Jesus did at Cana (as in many of his ~~miracles~~ [signs]) was really no more than a speeded-up version of what he does every year on a thousand hillsides as vines silently turn water from rainfall into wine. Millions of people enjoy that wine every year without for a moment recognizing the divine origin of it all. It's a reminder that we serve a God whose effusive

overflow of providential gifts knows no bounds. It's a reminder that God is also often content to watch people—sometimes even Christian people who should know better—from afar as they soak up the goodness of his creative work."^{iv}

All the guests enjoyed the wine, even if they did not know its source.
And it was not just the cheap, screw top, convenience store wine,
This was the like the best vintage made from the finest grapes,
the kind that is usually served first,
but comes in the end,
a great surprise, a beautiful experience.

But isn't that what resurrection is?
New and abundant life- whether here on earth or when we join God in heaven.
Only the servants and the disciples see and understand its source.
There's joy in knowing the source of our blessings.

One morning at breakfast I ate some of the muscadine jelly that one of our members so wonderfully shared with me, and I was back in the woods behind my house.
I could picture my brothers and dad, shaking those muscadine vines in the SC August heat,
loads of wild grapes dropping onto the tarp below.
In my mind's eye, I was there by my mother's side in our kitchen,
pressing the grape juice out, adding a ton of sugar,
making the jelly that would last for the whole year ahead and be gifts for neighbors.
In that moment I was captivated by the love of God in the sweetness of those grapes
and in the connection with my loved ones.
I thanked God with every remembrance of them.
It was a little resurrection.

And it began with someone sharing the gift of their homemade muscadine jelly with me.

As a child, I memorized the catechism. Maybe you did, too.

I do not remember all the questions and answers,
but the one that sticks with me is question one.

Q1: What is the chief end of man or humanity? (in other words, what's our purpose?)

Answer: To glorify God and enjoy God forever.

Not all know the source of the blessings of creation, even if they enjoy them.

Not all know the love of God, poured out in sacrificial, selfless love in Jesus' life, death and resurrection, that abundant grace that is deep and endless.

In fact, the word John uses here for the steward drawing out the wine,
is more akin to going deep into a well.

Not a just a dipper, one serving, but

The kind of overflowing, generous love of God-
like a well that never runs dry.

For those of us who do know its source, who have received Jesus,
we are charged to share our gifts with one another.

The Church is the Bride of Christ. And the wedding feast is ours.

The gifts of the Spirit, that new wine,

is given to Christ's church to serve the common good

- even when we do not get credit.

But point to the goodness of God, instead.

We are to live our lives in such a way that we are living proof of a loving God.

That's just another way of saying, "Glorify God and enjoy God forever."

SO...What if we pose the Marie Kondo question, "Does it spark joy?"and apply that to our lives, to our church.

And rather than just spark joy, but ask

"Does it share God's generous love with the world?"

Not what do I get, but what can I give?

Not what do I need, but what gift can I share that another needs?

Not what makes me comfortable, but what rings of resurrection?

What do we need to get rid of to experience resurrection joy?

Do we have too many distractions?

Do we need to rearrange priorities to practice JOY- Jesus, Others, yourself?

Do we need to get rid of anger and resentment, blame and stress?

... stuff, possessions that tie up our time and take our love?

...our privileges that we hoard for ourselves rather than use to serve all God's children?

I know a bar which gives a portion of its wine sales to do water mission like we give to Water Missions, International. The money is used to create water filtration systems for villages in developing countries.

The name of their program is clever, "Wine into Water."

On this Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday weekend,

I should share that some of us are working on a *Clemson Pledge to End Racism*.

Local congregations in town are beginning this work, seeking the Kingdom of God,

or as Martin Luther King, Jr. called it, "The Beloved Community" here in Clemson.

When the invitation came to me for Fort Hill to be a part,
I thought of all the work we already have to do, the plans we have made,
and then I thought, "How can we not do this work?"

It is what God calls us all to- to share the gifts of the Spirit for the common good-
to work together ecumenically for reconciliation and peace.

The Church is called to "Exhibit the Kingdom of God" and "Promote Social Righteousness."^v
We are called to seek first that Beloved Community on earth as it is in heaven.

The well is deep and God's love, like the wine, does not give out.
In fact love multiplies the more we give it away.
Friends, God's abundant, generous love has lavishly been poured out on all of us.
How can we share it?

Let's live our lives in such a way that we are living proof of a loving God.

To God be the glory- amen.

ⁱ Oliver, Mary, "When Death Comes"

ⁱⁱ Hopkins, Gerard Manley, "God's Grandeur" at www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44395/gods-grandeur.

ⁱⁱⁱ Browning, Elizabeth Barrett, "Aurora Leigh" in [The Oxford book of English mystical verse](#), chosen by D. H. S. Nicholson and A. H. E. Lee.

^{iv} adapted from Scott Hoezee, writing on John 2:1-11 at Sermon Starters, Epiphany 2C, Center for Excellence in Preaching at Calvin Seminary.

^v Read more about the Six Great Ends of the Church at www.presbyterianmission.org/story/pt-0818-greatends/