

**Yr. C, Epiphany 2**  
**January 16, 2022**  
**Preached by the Rev. Furman Buchanan**  
**St. Peter's Episcopal Church**  
**1238 words**

**Lessons:     **Isaiah 62:1-5****  
****Psalm 36:5-10****  
****1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12:1-11****  
****John 2:1-11****

The Rev. Bob Brearley, a Presbyterian pastor, put it best: “Weddings...are accidents waiting to happen. Something *almost always* goes wrong...”<sup>1</sup> That has been my experience too.

Thirty-one and a half years ago, on a very warm night in a crowded little church in Macon, Georgia, the priest had just finished preaching a beautiful, robust homily. He was walking back to the center of the chancel where he would whisper the vows for Kim and me to profess aloud. That is when my best man, standing beside me, whispered into my ear: “Furman, the junior groomsman is about to faint.”

Now the junior groomsman was my nephew, whom I love. He was about twelve years old at the time, listing—like a swamped little boat—slowly to the left...and then slowly back to the right. I didn’t see it at the time, but it’s captured forever on a VHS tape!

Looking straight ahead at the priest, I whispered back to my best man, from the side of my mouth, “I’m busy getting married right now. I need you to handle it.”

The mother of Jesus noticed an accident waiting to happen. On a warm night at a crowded little wedding in Cana of Galilee, something had gone terribly wrong. So, she whispered to Jesus, “*They have no wine!*” And he offered that disappointing reply, “What concern is that to you and me?”

Stop—right there. Don’t skip ahead just yet to the happy ending. I want us to sit with the tension of things going awry...of needing somebody to do something about it...and nobody, not even Jesus...seems to be available, or—perhaps—even willing to help us out.

How many times have you felt the weight of a burden that nobody else seems concerned about? How often have you called for help with a problem, and nobody answers?

Now, let’s be honest with ourselves. How many times have we heard of other peoples’ burdens, and thought to ourselves, “Not *my* fault. Not *my* problem.” or, to borrow Jesus’ words: “What concern is that to you and me?”

“I’m just one person. I’m busy right now. It’s not a good time for me. We’re just one small Church. We can’t really make much of a difference.” These are some of the various ways that we say, “What concern is that to you and me?”

Meanwhile, there are six, very large, stone water jars nearby— one hundred eighty gallons of potential! Those jars were created to serve an important purpose, but they are empty.

Have you thought about that? Have you considered what a scathing attack the Gospel according to John seems to be making against the religious community and its leadership? They are empty. Useless. Bereft. Just lots and lots of wasted potential.

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<sup>1</sup> The Rev. Robert Brearley, Essay on John 2:1-11 in *Feasting on the Word, Year C, Vol. 1*, David Bartlett & Barbara Brown Taylor, eds. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), p.260.

There are many disappointed people in our own day who level this same, scathing indictment against the Church—Empty. Useless. Bereft. A Waste. They are not wrong, you know. The Church is made up of imperfect people. God has chosen to employ imperfect people, earthen vessels, to do holy work.

So, wherever the people have empty hearts, the Church is also empty-hearted. Wherever people accept useless, self-centered teaching and preaching about cultural grievance; the Church is also useless, self-centered, and bitter. Wherever people are bereft of a loving, compassionate, purpose; the Church likewise is bereft of loving and compassionate service.

As our Presiding Bishop Michael Curry preaches, “If it ain’t about love; it ain’t about God.” So if the people of the Church are not about the business of love and compassion; then this is all a waste—a waste of potential, a waste of time.

When Jesus finally stepped up, he stepped up in a big way! He imagined a *new and better* purpose for those huge, empty jars. He told the servants to fill them all the way up to the top. They quickly filled each one of those large jars to the brim. And then Jesus did a new thing...a good thing...a timely thing.

Don’t be confused. Jesus did not turn water into wine. Jesus turned that water into *really good wine!* Well, what concern is that...to you and me.

I hope by now that it’s obvious. I hope you are already taking stock of what is empty in *your life* and seeing the miraculous potential of Jesus Christ to transform it into something new...and good...and timely.

How might we fill up our time with something more valuable, more godly...than the streams of arrogant, misleading, and contemptuous opinion flowing through cable television and social media? How might we fill up our God-given minds with thoughtfulness and creativity rooted in the deeply challenging truth of Jesus’ teachings? How might we fill up our God-given hearts with a renewed sense of passion for justice, freedom, and peace? How might we fill our God-given hands with the tools and tender mercy we need to embrace those who have been cast down, kicked aside, or left behind? How might we fill up our communities with hope and healing and a commitment to work *together* for the common good?

Anytime we commemorate a saint of the Church during a celebration of The Holy Eucharist, I get to pray these beautiful words—“We give thanks to you, Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, for the wonderful grace and virtue declared in all your saints, who have been the **chosen vessels** of your grace, and the lights of the world in their generations.”

Listen up! *You*...are the chosen vessels of God’s grace right here—and now. The Good News of today’s Gospel is that we don’t have to sit around here, *empty*. Whatever you are willing to offer; Christ is willing to transform!

If plain water is good enough to be turned into really good wine for the glory of God; then *you’re good enough* to serve a new, good, and timely purpose...for the glory of God and the blessing of other people.

In every time and place, things often go terribly wrong. All we have to do is look around to see all the accidents waiting to happen...to see all the people who have real needs. We’re not talking about wine anymore, but maybe they have no food. Maybe they have no shelter. Maybe they lack education...or a job...or a purpose. Perhaps they need someone to show them or *share with them* a little extra strength or courage.

Just don't bother looking for Jesus to fix it, if you're not willing to participate. That's not how it works. You see, Jesus is looking *to us*! Jesus is looking at you and me and the rest of the *Spirit-filled Church* and he sees lots and lots of jars standing around with gallons and gallons of potential. Jesus sees empty jars, ready to be filled and then...ready to be tapped to help fill the needs of the world for the glory of God.

So, it's time to stop asking ourselves, "What concern is that to you and me?" It's time to start *seeing ourselves* as the chosen vessels of God's grace.

The call in today's Gospel does not come from Jesus. It comes from his mother. And it's simple and straightforward and always timely. "Do...whatever he tells you."

Amen.