

2 Epiphany  
 17 Jan 2016  
 Rev Ken Wratten at St Stephen's, San Jose, Ca  
 Isaiah 62:1-5  
 1 Cor 12:1-11  
 John 2:1-11

At that wedding party in Cana, Jesus' divine nature was revealed to his followers: This wasn't just a trick to turn water into wine: it was about Jesus having Transforming Power. He changed plain water into the finest wine. He changed no wine into 180 gallons of wine. He changed the worry and embarrassment of the hosts into delight. And he changed followers (groupies) into believers.

Jesus still has the power to transform, through his Spirit. He has the power to transform you and me into his image, into his likeness. That is what this life is about; it is one of our core purposes. We were created to grow into the likeness of Jesus Christ.

2 Cor 3:18: <sup>18</sup> And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

Eph 4:22-24: <sup>22</sup> You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; <sup>23</sup> to be made new in the attitude of your minds; <sup>24</sup> and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

2 Cor 5:17: <sup>17</sup> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

Jesus illustrates this power to transform us (not just water into wine) in Mark 2:22, where he describes himself as 'new wine', and ourselves as changing from 'old wineskins' into 'new wineskins'. From Mark, "<sup>22</sup> And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins." These 'new wineskins' might be understood as the new creation that Jesus is ready to transform us into.

Tell story of lady at Classic Car Wash: not transformed yet. Sometimes it takes time; it is not immediate like Jesus turning water into wine.

This power through the Spirit changed a small group of Episcopalians meeting at Franklin Saving and Loan bank in 1974 into St Stephen's mission church. That same power changed a mission into a parish; and created a

model preschool; and established sponsorships of Sudanese refugee children which offer these kids a life opportunity they would never otherwise get. Think of the changes you have seen happen through this faith community.

So one lesson from Jesus turning water into wine is his power to transform us into brothers and sisters centered in the kinds of gifts that Paul describes in the 1 Corinthians passage: big gifts like: wisdom, knowledge, faith, and others; and more subtle gifts like patience, tolerance, listening, caring, trusting, and generosity.

For us to become the person God wants us to be in 2016, we will have to let go of the old wineskins in our life so that God can pour himself into the wineskin of our new life-in-Christ. This may mean, for example, that we cannot try to pour the new wine of “agape, self-giving love” into an old wineskin of “putting ourselves first.” Otherwise, “both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined.”

This year, we will have to change some things in order to be the person God wants us to be. Are you ready to make the changes? Do you feel the excitement of knowing that God is right there with you, not just helping you change, but leading you in the change? You do not need the power to do it, because Jesus offers that power to you.

The second learning from this passage is Jesus’ ability to fill our lives with **abundant living**. He didn’t just fill a carafe with wine for the wedding party; He produced six huge jars, 180 gallons, 2,880 glasses of the finest wine. That much wine would accommodate the thirst of the whole town. The gift he gave to the people at that wedding celebration was way beyond what was needed: it was abundant. In the same way, the wine of Jesus’ Spirit, the new wine he produces for us, will never run out.

Through our deepest needs, he offers us strength and peace. There is no pain we endure that Jesus has not experienced on the cross; there is no loss we have suffered that Jesus has not suffered with the death of his friend Lazarus; there is no sense of loss that we experience that Jesus has not felt from the betrayal of one of his close friends, Judas, a betrayal that cost him his life. Through all of these experiences Jesus shares with us, we at the same time know that he is the Son of God, he is divine, and he has the power to use every one of our hurts to make something good come out of it.

I remember the anxiety I felt when I moved our family back to my home town when my mother was battling cancer. Working for my father put so much stress in my life that I ended up in the emergency room one day, from such intense pain in my chest that I was sure I was having a heart attack. It

ended up being the anxiety of working with him, along with making so little money that I could not even make house payments. I felt like a failure. But that low point led me to a career course correction that brought me to San Jose. And that change brought me to this ministry and to this community. I could not ask for a greater blessing in my life.

Turning water into wine wasn't done by Jesus to dazzle anyone, it was done to signify that he was the Messiah. Jesus' power to change water into wine, and his power to change us, is a miracle of abundance, of transformation, and of new possibilities. And it is a gift from Jesus to you.

This coming week, please reflect on this Scripture verse being at work in your life:

Ephesians 3:20; "Glory to God, whose power working in us can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine. "

Amen