

**Gospel Reading: John 2:1-11**

*The wedding at Cana*

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 me and to you? 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 person in charge of the banquet." So they took it.

2:9 When the person in charge tasted the water that had become wine and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), that person 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.

**1 Corinthians 12:1-11**

*A variety of gifts but one Spirit*

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

12:2 You know that when you were gentiles, 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,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**GOD OF LIFE, MAY THE WORDS OF MY MOUTH,  
AND THE MEDITATIONS OF ALL OUR MINDS AND HEARTS,  
LEAD US TO DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF YOU,  
AND THE LOVE YOU CALL US TO LIVE. AMEN.**

**SERMON**

“Divine Gifts”

Jeannie Taylor LLWL

Something almost always goes wrong at a wedding. You want it to be the perfect day, but inevitably it rains, the flower girl has a tantrum, the best man loses the ring, or someone doesn't make it on time. At my second wedding my brother George was supposed to do one of the readings, but he went to the gym for a workout first then got on the wrong bus and totally missed the ceremony. It turned out alright though, one of my other brothers did the reading for him.

When Jesus performed his first miracle, according to the gospel of John, it wasn't to heal the sick or feed the five thousand. It was to change water into wine at a wedding. We may think it quite trivial, although to the hosts it would have been a great embarrassment to run out of wine. But at that place and time, Jesus' calling was to bring joy to a couple and their family. There was no need that day for preaching, healing, or smoothing rough waters. What was needed was good wine for a party, and Jesus demonstrated that God's love comes to us in the most everyday ways and places to bring us joy and possibilities.

There was so much wine, and it was of such excellent quality that people took notice. It was common for a host to use a lower quality of wine later in a wedding when the guests were already a bit tipsy. But this new wine that was created by Jesus was exceptional and unexpected.

The promise of new wine is mentioned several times in the Hebrew Scripture, especially with reference to the Promised Land. It is also referred to as a blessing, a product of an abundant harvest. Not a party trick at a wedding reception, but a genuine gift of the Holy Spirit, filling us with love, joy and acceptance.

Jesus was both wholly human and wholly divine. According to the gospels he laughed, he wept, and he got angry, but he also used his divine gifts to help, heal and forgive the people he met along the way.

The season of Epiphany is all about giftedness. We began with the gifts of the Magi, and then we celebrate God's gift of grace through Jesus' baptism. Today we will focus on the gifts of the spirit, bestowed on each of us for the sake of the community.

In the second passage that Ken read, Paul tells the Corinthians, and us, that we all have spiritual gifts to use for the common good. Not everyone recognizes the gifts in others, especially if they are kept hidden because of fear, greed or desire for power. We may not even recognize our own gifts, unless somebody draws attention to them.

Sometimes we confuse our gifts with our vocation. You may be a good accountant, but your gift is storytelling, and making people laugh. Or a good realtor, with the gift of playing drums in a band. Even if you are retired, you may have spiritual gifts like wisdom, patience and kindness. In this congregation, as I mentioned earlier in the theme conversation we have many many gifts that the people share.

Being a good listener is a wonderful gift to others. Last fall I took a 10-week pastoral care course, and the main thing I learned is that the role of the pastoral care worker is to listen. Not to fix things, to preach or chat with family members, but to accompany people who are sick, lonely or grieving and just listen.

I'd like to share an excerpt from a story called "Sundays at 7," by Jennifer Kennedy, from the book *"Kindness Matters"*.

Jennifer's father Fred had been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and told that he might not live to Christmas or see his 60<sup>th</sup> birthday. Now Fred was blessed with a dear friend, Mike, from university days, who lived in another city.

Jennifer recounts:

Always thinking of others, my dad remained positive and strong with my mom, my brother and me. He knew how distraught we were and didn't want to burden us with his own emotional turmoil. But when Mike came to visit, he broke down about the painful reality of a terminal diagnosis. He shared his fears about preparing his family for his death and his deep sadness about not being able to watch the four young grandchildren he adored grow up.

Mike listened and, at the end of their tearful visit, said, “Fred, can I call you this Sunday at 7?” My dad thanked him for the therapeutic talk but assured him he didn’t need to go to any more trouble.

Mike did call that Sunday at 7, unsure whether my dad would answer. At the end of another emotional conversation, he said again, “Fred, can I call you next Sunday at 7?”

And so, each Sunday, Mike offered an outlet for my dad during a trying time. During a dark week, my dad knew he had a glimmer of a light awaiting him in his weekly conversation. He found great comfort in a listening ear when he could be honest about the highs and lows of a cancer journey. Mike looked forward to this guaranteed time to catch up with his dear friend and cherished their talks too. His wife, Suzy, says their ritual was just as helpful to Mike as it was to my dad.

Through 52 chemotherapy treatments, Mike called each Sunday at 7. Through the lows of learning the tumor would never be operable, Mike called Sunday at 7. Through news that cancer had spread to the liver, Mike called Sunday at 7. Through CAT scans that continued to show stable cancer, Mike called Sunday at 7.

It has now been seven years of Sundays at 7.

My Dad’s tumor miraculously remains stable. He jokes that he is superstitious that Mike’s phone calls have brought him good luck, so they can’t stop now. But, perhaps, there is true value in the therapeutic power of emotional support.

Too often, not knowing what to do when someone is going through a difficult situation leads us to the worst option possible: doing nothing at all.

Jennifer concludes,

It turns out we don’t need to have the perfect words of comfort, create elaborate gifts or desperately search the aisles at Hallmark. The greatest support we can give a friend in their time of need is an offer of ourselves. A promise of a consistent call with a caring heart and a listening ear doesn’t cost a thing but is a priceless gesture of just the right size. It’s as simple as “Can I call you this Sunday at 7?”

So what is your gift? Anybody can provide the gift of friendship. This week, try to reach out to someone with a phone call, a visit or even an email. You might just make their day. And when you recognize the giftedness of others, let them know how much they are appreciated.

I was reading this book yesterday, “A Brief History of Riverside United Church Ottawa – the first 15 years 1962 to 1977”, and in it I found a hymn written by Flo Robinson, to the tune of “Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee.”

The third verse goes:

“Joy, oh joy that Christ has called us  
Asks the talents we can give,  
Comes and shares our daily burden,  
Gives the strength we need to live.”

The Holy Spirit is with each one of us.  
We are not alone.  
Thanks be to God  
Amen