

“When Jesus Shows Up!”

A Pep Talk for Miracle Sunday

Text: John 2: 1-11

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An affirmation about Jesus and a pocketful of sparkle: these thoughts ignite me with wonder today!

I'll start with Jesus, first and foremost and always in my heart. Jesus: the human face of God . . . more than a friend, but at least that much . . . arguably the best teacher ever to live . . . and the very heart of love, hospitality and compassion.

Time and again, the Gospel stories reveal a certain quality of abundance that follows him along his way. Whenever and wherever he drops by, there's always more than enough to go around for everyone ó and then some. Enough love and generosity, enough mercy and tenderness, enough goodness and grace, enough fish and bread and wine.

Consider the very first miracle. Jesus happened by at a wedding in Cana at Galilee. Weddings in those days were week-long celebrations, a reflection of Jewish hospitality, and there was always an ample supply of food and wine. But apparently on this occasion, the wine ran out. Various manner of conversation ensued, after which Jesus asked that six stone jars be filled with water, each with a capacity of about thirty gallons.

And you know what happened next! By the present attention of Jesus to the matter at hand, the water turned to wine! And not just a little bit, but one hundred and eighty gallons! Scholars call this a õthick textö with multiple layers of meaning. Among those layers, this one pops front and center: when Jesus shows up, incredible things are possible and there is plenty enough for everyone ó and even more left over!

Or, remember when Jesus fed the multitudes. Five thousand hungry souls ó and, by the way, *also* women and children, as the scriptures tell. That means it was more like fifteen thousand on the slight side! But Jesus showed up, and with five barley loaves and a few fish (surely not enough for him and his disciples after a long day) he began to spread and share what little they had. It was an inspiring and amazing act of generosity.

And you know what happened next! That small supply somehow grew very large as a tsunami of sharing broke loose among a throng of hungry people. They all followed his lead and shared what little they had. So there it is again: when Jesus shows up, incredible things are possible and there is plenty enough to go around!

And it's still true! It still happens. When we focus our attention on Jesus, amazing and astonishing things can and do occur!

In fact, on a day we are calling Miracle Sunday, the abundant presence of God is with us already ó miracle enough! And get this: that Presence is not hinged on the number of dollars that we raise this morning, though please don't mistake that! It is grounded in the magnificent stories of holiness that happen right here.

For one thing, I dare say that it's miraculous that we are still here as a church. Three hundred years is a very long time to sustain what started out as a new church on a small patch of farmland. The stresses and challenges have been plentiful. But Jesus has shown up time and again, and, even under duress, there has been plenty enough endurance, commitment and vision to see us through.

We never could have pulled off the *Elevator Plus* project six years ago without the amazing miracle of generosity empowered by his presence. No single one of us, or even a small cluster, could have done it on our own. But we all believed in the best for our church, and by mystery of inspiration, Jesus showed up and gave us all a lift ó four floors and then some!

Re-do the chapel with mostly volunteer help, and the kitchen, too? No way! Raise three hundred food items per week to meet the needs of hunger nearby? Can't be done! Create a hands-on-way to teach kids on the fourth floor? Not likely! Sponsor a Habitat house for a deserving family? Huh! Transform the auditorium into a first-century village in real-time? Really! Find a-dozen-and-a-half of our folks in active conversation with a nearby Mosque? Wow! Plant the tiny mustard seeds of Taizé worship and watch it grow to fifty? Amazing!

Most important: nourish our souls with word and worship and music and prayer. Give us hope and purpose in times that are very challenging. Bless us with new young families and strength for tomorrow. And create in us and around us a church family ready to ask tomorrow's questions today.

If we let ourselves dream, and if we open our eyes and look around, there is no doubt about it! Jesus keeps showing up. If it were not so, we would have closed up shop a long time ago!

You can see the pitch coming! Today is *Miracle Sunday* because of the vast goodness of God! Today is *Miracle Sunday* because Jesus keeps showing up! We are blessed beyond counting and our cup runneth over!

But, let's not miss this moment ó and it will be gone before we know it. We only turn 300 once! And what a wonderful thing it would be if we followed the lead of Jesus and made sure that when all is said and done, people would gasp with amazement and say that at First Church there is always more than enough! As in the Living Spirit of Jesus, we say: Amen!

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