

Sunday, January 19, 2025 ~ John 2:1-11

When my children were young, they were often in cahoots. They liked to conspire and make up rituals. I don't know who inspired the one I am about to share with you, but, at around 7 and 9 years old, it became their ritualistic joint response that whenever I called upstairs for **one** of them, **both** of them would shout down to me, in what i think they thought was a Russian accent, "What do you want with me woman?" . It made me laugh every time...and I called up to them from the kitchen a **lot**..., but it often raised the eyebrows of anyone else who was in the kitchen with me. I didn't get offended because I knew they were having fun, not being disrespectful. When I initially read this scripture I laughed, even though I'm 100% certain that Jesus did not use a fake Russian accent when he answered Mary.

This is a perfect, and silly, example of how we each bring our own experiences and culture to every story we read in the Bible. **And** I can see how another reader might think Jesus was being a little rude to Mary by answering the way he did. But the truth is, Jesus was being respectful to Mary, not curt or dismissive, when he called her "Woman". So, again, this scripture is a reminder to us that we bring our Personal experiences and our culture to everything we read, **AND** our culture is much different than the culture and cultures that produced the writings that make up our Bible. That is why looking for themes is so important. And one major theme behind this miracle at Cana is the theme of abundance.

Each of those stone Jars would have held about 30 gallons. That's 180 gallons of wine. An Abundance of wine. And note that Jesus didn't say to Mary, "Mom, why should I do anything? Your friends should have prepared and planned better!". No, there was no recrimination. That alone is a lesson worth considering. Because those jars were special jars. They were

the jars that held the water used for ceremonial cleansing. Jesus is setting his disciples, and us, up to understand His mission. Abundance and purification without a bit of recrimination. This is the mindset of the kingdom of God.

Some of You may know that I play pickleball, the greatest sport ever invented. Now it may come as a shock, but I don't play professionally. The thing is, in pickleball, you have to trust that your opponent will be honest. Your opponent decides whether a ball you've hit landed in or out of the court. It may sound silly, but this is a great metaphor for an abundance mindset. When you have an abundance mindset you trust that everyone is doing the best they can at the time. And when you have that kind of trust in your fellow human, it is much easier to be kind and forgiving. And an abundance mindset is a light mindset. Jesus tells us his yoke is light. A scarcity mindset is burdensome, it is heavy. When you have a scarcity mindset you are always carrying the weight of suspicion and unrest. According to research conducted by the National Science Foundation\* around 80% of our thoughts are negative. We human beings are naturally inclined to a scarcity mindset. That is why we love systems of exclusion. That is why we are naturally drawn to ideologies that separate and classify people. But that does not describe the mindset of Jesus does it? Jesus, who ate and drank with "sinners" happily. There are no stories of Jesus sitting down to eat with the sinners and berating them. Jesus only has words for those who think they are not sinners, for those who think they are better than sinners. For those who preach that God's love is a scarce commodity given only to the worthy.

Jesus, in turning the water that was in the sacramental jars into wine, in such copious amounts, was giving us a heads-up. 180 gallons of wine was wayyy more than they needed. AND it was WAAYYY better than they expected. Jesus, in this miracle at Cana is telling us who God is and revealing God's too good to be true plan for humanity. Jesus will tell his disciples in John 10:10 that He has come so that humanity should have life and not just life but ABUNDANT life. Having an abundant life is not about having a lot of good stuff, but rather having a mindset that sets you free from stuff. How ironic that an accumulation mindset and an abundance mindset are completely opposite. Abundance is about generosity... giving... Accumulation is about separating and obtaining. Jesus wants to set free from this addiction, this Desire to take and take and take. That's the light yoke. And not just being free from material stuff, but maybe even more importantly being free from immaterial stuff like social status, respectability, the need to appear a certain way. To have life abundantly is to be free from the need to have a certain image, which makes us free to give and forgive. If you feel offended, you can be sure you are in a scarcity mindset. There is nothing to offend in an abundance mindset. It's just like letting my opponent in pickleball make the call and trusting that they are doing the best they can. That's the attitude...there's nothing to offend. There's no image to protect. Forgiveness, gentleness, mercy....these should be flowing from us abundantly the way they flow from God. That is why our image of God is so important. If our God is wrathful and violent, our mindset will imitate that. If our God only has so much love and forgiveness to give...we will follow suit.

But If our God is Mercy and love in abundance. With such little regard for image that He lets himself be nailed to a cross, We will carry **that** ideal in our hearts.

Jesus is our exemplar. We have an example we can follow.

In the gospels, Jesus alludes to the kingdom of God being a feast 15 times. Water to wine. Wine to blood. Always a feast for humanity. The feast that we are all invited to share. In abundance. We remember this when we celebrate the sacrament of communion. We remember that this feast is God, Given to us by a God that holds up both sides of the relationship, on the cross, In abundant love. conquering death for us and asking us to give each other the same abundant compassion that we have been given by Him, Her, God.

Every day, every moment, we have the choice to turn from the negative, to refuse to give the scarcity mindset a foothold in our lives and thoughts. We have been commanded to imitate Jesus, to have mindsets of abundance. Which means trusting that the other person is doing the best they can at the time. It means not hoarding **resources** or **time**, or **compassion**. It means giving as Jesus did, with wild abandon. He gave His power in healing, and in feeding the thousands and turning water into an absurd amount of wine. He gave his compassion to people who had been cast aside by including them in meals and conversation... he gave his very life to destroy death forever.

So, for a start, let's watch our thoughts and our hearts this week. Let's choose a mindset of abundance. Let's live with light hearts, loving, forgiving, moving our little spot on earth toward a heavenly mindset of abundance. Let's imitate Jesus.