Sermon January 16 2022 ~ Epiphany 2

Holy God, in this season of Epiphany, may we be blessed with your wisdom and may we truly see. Amen.

Jouni and I sang together the litany at Rev. Ann Camber’s ordination to the diaconate held yesterday afternoon here in St. Paul’s. It was a beautiful service and you can watch it on YouTube through St. Paul’s Media. I thank Bishop Victoria for presiding at the ordination in place of Archbishop Anne who was not able to travel to Thunder Bay because of omicron.

When Jouni and I practised our chanting, we were in the nave using the piano. I had the lights turned on but they were not bright enough for Jouni to see the music and the words. He then turned on a bright overhead light in the chancel. Through this light he was able to see.

Last week I promised to teach you a Bible verse each and every week. Last week’s verse was from Isaiah 43:1 *I have called you by name; you are mine.*

This week’s Bible verse is from the Psalm appointed for today and it ties in with the light of Epiphany, the light of the wise men, the light of wisdom, and the star that the wise men followed from the east to Bethlehem.

*In your light we see light.* Psalm 36:9

What does this verse mean? I have been rolling it around in my mouth and in my heart. In the light of God, we begin to see the truth of what is in front of us ~ the truth of circumstances and people’s motives. Signs of the presence of God in our daily lives. The wonder and the bounty of God’s love. We know that our wisdom comes from God.

This verse is proceeded by this ~ that God is the fountain of life, who gives us everything, especially drink from the river of delights (from Psalm 36).

*In your light we see light.*

Last week we celebrated the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptizer. This week we reflect upon the first miracle of Jesus. He doesn’t do a healing or walk on water. Jesus doesn’t make a blind man see or heal a woman who has been bleeding for years and years. This miracle happens at a wedding reception. At a party, a celebration.

It was commonplace for the wedding celebration to go on for up to a week. We don’t know who was getting married but because Jesus’ mother Mary and Jesus and his disciples were invited to the wedding, it might have been a family member or a close friend. It would have been important to keep the good food coming and the wine flowing for the entire celebration.

We read in the gospel of John that the wedding began on the third day. This was a popular day for weddings. The third day for Jewish people is Tuesday as Sunday is the first day following Shabbat on Saturday which is the 7th day. In the first story of creation in the first chapter of Genesis, the third day of creation when the vegetables and plants and trees were created was the only day of creation in which God said it was good twice. *And God saw that it was good*. (Genesis 1:9,12) This was then considered to be beautiful day for weddings.

This first miracle of turning the water into wine points to the divinity of Christ and is also a blessing to the community. Imagine how the parents of the bride and groom were feeling. The wedding was going to be a disaster. They had run out of wine. The family would lose face in the community. They had truly lost hope. The embarrassment, the shame of it all.

I love the thread of water carrying us from the baptism of Jesus to this miracle of turning water into wine in Cana. Water. The river of life. The abundance of God.

When Jesus turns up, there is renewed hope. There is abundance. There is restoration. *In your light we see light.*

In my Archdeacon’s Report from last year that I wrote for the Deanery of Thunder Bay – North Shore I included this statement*: I pray that God will bless you with spirits of rejoicing, knowing that this pandemic will end once we have all been vaccinated.*

Was I ever wrong! Here we are just about to end the second year of the pandemic and nothing has ended. In fact our number of cases of COVID are at an all-time high. We are all getting tired of isolation, home-schooling, no travel, closed restaurants and working from home. We are tired of surgeries and medical procedures being delayed, sometimes for months. We are tired of COVID headlining the news day in and day out. **We have run out of wine at the wedding.**

Just this past Thursday, I had a phone call from the Executive Director of the PWRDF (Anglican Church of Canada’s Fund to help other) ~ Primates World Relief and Development Fund on Thursday. His name is Will Postma. Parishioners Carol Knox and Nancy Wallace work hard to support the PWRDF and I thank both of them.

Will wishes to support the indigenous people in northern communities, especially in Bearskin Lake where over half of the residents have COVID. In our prayers of the people we have been praying for relief for the people in Bearskin Lake. Our prayers have been answered.

By Friday morning, less than 24 hours later, we had a signed contract by Archbishop Anne with the Diocese of Algoma and PWRDF. Treasurer Jane Mesich put the cheque in the mail. By Friday afternoon, I had obtained a listing of needed food for Bearskin from Sharon Angeconeb who has been in contact with the Chef in Bearskin, and I have a list of the PPE needs for Bishop Lydia in Kingfisher. By 3 pm, I had ordered the food through Westfort Foods and a truck, organized through former grand chef Charles Fox, will pick up the food on Monday at noon and drive it on an ice road to Bearskin. I am spending $7500 on food and will be spending $7500 on PPE. A total of $15000 granted within a day! Abundance. Generosity. Support. God bless the Anglican Church of Canada and the PWRDF.

That is turning water into wine, my friends in Christ.

*In your light we see light.*