**First Reading Isaiah 62:1-5**

*The people’s return to Judah after the exile was marred by economic and political troubles. Nevertheless, the prophet declares, Jerusalem and Judah will be restored. God will rejoice over Jerusalem as a bridegroom rejoices over the bride, and the people are called to the celebration.*

1 For Zion’s sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest, until her vindication shines out like the dawn, and her salvation like a burning torch. 2 The nations shall see your vindication, and all the kings your glory; and you shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the Lord will give. 3 You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God. 4 You shall no more be termed Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate; but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her, and your land Married; for the Lord delights in you, and your land shall be married. 5 For as a young man marries a young woman, so shall your builder marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.

**Psalm 36:5-10**

5 Your love, O Lord, reaches to the heavens, and your faithfulness to the clouds. 6 Your righteousness is like the strong mountains, your justice like the great deep; you save humankind and animals, O Lord. 7 How priceless is your love, O God! All people take refuge under the shadow of your wings. 8 They feast upon the abundance of your house; you give them drink from the river of your delights. 9 For with you is the well of life, and in your light we see light. 10 Continue your lovingkindness to those who know you, and your favor to those who are true of heart.

**Second Reading 1 Corinthians 12:1-11**

*The congregation at Corinth experienced division as people were comparing their spiritual gifts, thinking some to be superior to others. Paul invites this fractured community to trust that God’s Holy Spirit has gifted them all perfectly for their mission together.*

1 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. 2 You know that when you were pagans, you were enticed and led astray to idols that could not speak. 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. 4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; 5 and there are varieties of services, but the

same Lord; 6 and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. 7 To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 8 To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 10 to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. 11 All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.

**Gospel John 2:1-11**

*Turning water to wine at the wedding at Cana is described as the first of Jesus’ signs. Through many such epiphanies, Jesus reveals that he bears God’s creative power and joyful presence into the world.*

1 On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. 2 Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. 3 When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.” 4 And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.” 5 His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.” 6 Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. 7 Jesus said to them, “Fill the jars with water.” And they filled them up to the brim. 8 He said to them, “Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.” So, they took it. 9 When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom 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.” 11 Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

**Sermon**

 Today we find ourselves back in the gospel of John again. Just when I try to get us all prepared and excited about the year of Luke, we end up in John again! And, even more curiously, today’s passage has Jesus attending a wedding! Isn’t there something kinda cool about seeing Jesus doing something some human, like attending a wedding? He wasn’t always

off praying or teaching or healing somebody. It is another reminder from John chapter 1 of what it looks like when the Word becomes flesh and tabernacles, dwells, lives with humanity. He does all the human things.

 So, it is kinda cool to see Jesus at a wedding. But what is interesting about this story of Jesus being at a wedding is that Jesus performs a sign or what we call in other gospels a miracle here. In John’s gospel, we refer to these events in which Jesus does something out-of-the-ordinary as signs because they point to some truth about Jesus in relationship to God. We will talk about what this particular sign at the wedding reveals about God revealed in Jesus in a few minutes.

 This story of Jesus at a wedding in Cana in Jesus’ ministry-launching event in John’s gospel. Each of the 4 gospels has some event with which Jesus’ ministry begins, and that launching event gives us an idea of what will be emphasized about Jesus’ identity, character and mission in each gospel. So as we ponder why Jesus’ ministry-launching event in John’s gospel is correcting a wedding fau pax, we must also ponder what it is emphasizing about Jesus’ identity, character and mission that will continue to be lifted up throughout John’s gospel.

 So, a wedding. Why a wedding? It might be a little difficult for us to understand because weddings have changed forms quite a lot since Jesus’ day. Today weddings can be anything from glamorous to simple. There are those who have to have the most beautiful dress that ever existed, doves have to be released, it has to be a destination wedding on the most remote beach, all of the couples, siblings, cousins, friends, and 4 of the cutest little human beings who haven’t a clue what to do or how to act are included in the wedding party. And then there are those who get married at the courthouse or on a remote mountaintop or in Vegas. Weddings take a much different shape in our day than they did in the 1st century, so it can be difficult to understand the situation.

 But here is the situation. Wedding celebrations at that time lasted about a week. The festive drink for the occasion was wine, and there would be wine throughout the whole celebration. No question. If wine ran out, that would be extremely embarrassing to the family. A wedding gave the opportunity for the community to come together and celebrate, and out of

hospitality, the family would provide enough food and drink for the community to celebrate. Sounds like a logistical nightmare to me, but that’s how it was.

 As the wine was running out on this occasion, the mother of Jesus, takes notice and mentions it to Jesus. It seems that, at first, Jesus is not interested in intervening. But eventually he does, and when the servants fill the water jars with water and draw some out to give to the person in charge, we find out that the water has become the best tasting wine…better than what they would normally serve at this point in the celebration. Now, not many people knew what Jesus had done…only His mother, the disciples and the servants. But it certainly had an impact on those Jesus had called to follow him.

 So why a wedding? There are 2 possible reasons. The first is that, once again, this is what happens when the Word becomes flesh and tabernacles in the midst of humanity. The glory of the Lord is not always revealed in grand, public spectacles but in the everyday doings of human beings. Here it happens to be a common wedding celebration. How cool is that? There is not a corner of the human experience that is not touched by the glory of the Lord when the Word becomes flesh and lives the human life with us.

 The second possible reason is because of the fact that the wedding celebrates a relationship to which 2 people or 2 families commit for a lifetime. Marriage language is used in various places in the Old Testament to describe God’s relationship, God’s commitment to God’s people. And yes, there are places in which the unfaithfulness of God’s people is described as a spouse who is unfaithful. But here at this wedding, the very first thing that the Word who become flesh does is reveal that, through him, God has come to God’s people once again, to renew the relationship with God’s people. The water turning to wine…the enormous amount of wine that Jesus produces…both reveal and celebrate that God has come renew the relationship with God’s people eternally.

This IS the FIRST sign in John’s gospel and every other sign reveals something about the impact that relationship with God, through Jesus, has on human life. Life lived in relationship with God, through Jesus is not the same as life lived without that relationship. Life in relationship with God, through Jesus changes the relationship with have with ourselves, with others, with life in general. Those 6 jars…120-180 gallons…about 1,000 bottles of wine…the best that had yet been served…this is the first description we have in John’s gospel for what

“grace upon grace” looks like when the Word becomes flesh and tabernacles among us. It is abundance of the best of life…not of “stuff” like the best car or the best clothes or the best house…but the best of what life is meant to be…relationship with others, having what we NEED to live, enjoying God’s creation the way it was meant to be enjoyed, learning and growing and creating life and beauty as the co-creators God created us to be.

And THIS life, this abundant, overflowing, the best-that-there-is kind of life is for ALL of humanity walking this earth. And while we know that not everyone has this experience of life, we gather today and every week to once again experience God’s grace upon grace poured into our lives through the life, death and resurrection of Christ so that this grace upon grace, this abundant life overflows from our hearts into the hearts and lives of those who are in dire need of grace, of something kind, something life-giving, something they don’t have to work so hard for to give them the same love, the same life that we ourselves have received from God through Christ.

Tomorrow is the commemoration of Martin Luther King, Jr. day, and we remember him for being, not only a relentless champion of justice for people of color but also one who understood the abundance of God’s grace and love for all. As we remember all he said and did to work for grace-sharing for all of God’s people, we hold in front of us the image of galloons and galloons of the best wine…an image of the abundance of God’s goodness given for all of humanity. We have not been called to protect God’s grace from running out. In the footsteps of Martin Luther King, Jr. who was called by his relationship with God, in Christ, let the grace upon grace, the goodness of God, flow through our relationships, flow through our community, flow to those who are in deepest need of grace, and peace, and life. Amen.