

Focus on John 2:1–11

WHAT is important to know?

—From “Exegetical Perspective,” Linda McKinnish Bridges

Six water pots, used for ritual cleansing, are available. These are symbols that point to the emptiness of the traditional religion. The six pots, while used for religious purposes, are still not complete. The pots contain only water. Soon Jesus will fill them with eschatological wine, a rich symbol in the biblical tradition inferring prosperity, abundance, good times; the wine will overflow the water pots. Their true purpose will be fulfilled. Changing the pots of water into pots flowing over with good wine becomes a metaphor for Jesus’ ministry as he brings vitality to the ancient religion.

WHERE is God in these words?

—From “Theological Perspective,” Carol Lakey Hess

Yet just as the mother of Jesus saw her son as one who could—and should—meet need, so do many followers of Jesus. We see a world in need, and we believe in one who claimed to bring abundant life to those in need. In a world where for so many there is no clean water—let alone fine wine—where is the extravagance of God? In a world where children play in bomb craters the size of thirty-gallon wine jugs, why the divine reluctance? In a world where desperate mothers must say, “We have no food,” why has the hour not yet come? No matter how we rationalize divine activity, we still want to tug at Jesus’ sleeve and say: “they have no wine.”

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

—From “Pastoral Perspective,”

Robert M. Brearley

It is called Cana Grace, and it is worth a miracle because it manifests the glory of God—the very God who wants even now for the community of faith to be a celebration of people. Brothers and sisters in Christ eating on the back porch and laughing until the sun goes down; a new members’ dinner at someone’s home that ends with folks giving thanks to God for the welcome they have received at church—it is called Cana Grace. Give thanks for everyone in your church and in your life who has the knack for throwing a party. What a way to begin a ministry!

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

—From “Homiletical Perspective,”

Ernest Hess

The chief steward recognizes the excellence of the wine when it is brought to him, but he does not know its source in Jesus, or its meaning as a sign pointing to God’s grace. We are often like that, recognizing good gifts without recognizing their source in the Creator’s love. The steward also notes that the ability of people to discern even what is good wine is typically impaired when they are drunk. Both literal drunkenness and, more profoundly, drunkenness as a metaphor for all the ways we dull our physical and spiritual perceptions prevent us from recognizing and choosing not just the better things in life, but the One who is the source of all these things.

Transforming Need to Abundance



The following statistics give snapshots of a persistent and seemingly intractable problem that serves to limit access to the abundant life for millions. Choose one statistic representing a problem, or do a search for statistics on another persistent problem of which you are aware. Sketch a symbol for that problem, or create a metaphor using words. Then transform your symbol or metaphor into one delineating abundant life. For example, you might draw an empty bowl to symbolize persistent hunger. Persons filling the bowl to overflowing from other bowls freely offered might represent abundance.

Reflect on the following:

-  What actions or attitudes of those of us who live in abundance contribute to blocking others from the life God intends for them?
-  What is one small step you could take on behalf of making the abundant life available for all?
-  What are some steps we as a community of faith might consider taking?

Statistics

1. Since 1990, the international poverty line rose from \$1 a day, to \$1.25 a day, and most recently in 2015 to \$1.90. In the United States alone, 689 million people live in extreme poverty, surviving on less than \$1.90 a day.
2. Seventy percent of poor children were children of color. More than 1 in 4 Black children and more than 1 in 5 Hispanic, American Indian, and Alaska Native children were poor compared with 1 in 12 white children.
3. More than 77 percent of Hispanic and more than 79 percent of Black fourth- and eighth-grade public school students were not proficient in reading or math in 2019.
4. In 2017, 785 million people were lacking access to clean water.
5. Worldwide, about 160 million children ages 5 to 17 are engaged in child labor, nearly half of them work under hazardous conditions.
6. Global poverty is expected to rise for the first time in 20 years. The COVID-19 pandemic threatens to push 88 million to 115 million people into extreme poverty in 2020, with the total rising to as many as 150 million by 2021.
7. Worldwide, 2.6 million people, many of them children, die from hunger-related causes each year.
8. In a 2020 report, at least 133,000 people were living in a state of catastrophe or famine and at least another 28 million people in 38 countries/territories were considered “one step away” from famine.

Statistics compiled from
www.worldvision.org/sponsorship-news-stories/global-poverty-facts,
www.bread.org, and
www.childrensdefense.org