

Wine Sign John 2:1-11
Epiphany 2C

Slide: Empty Fridge

“We have no milk.” That is a sentence I found myself saying as I stared at the inside of my fridge last week, when we got back from a trip and had just about no food around. I had a bowl of granola in a bowl, the kind that already had blueberries, almond flakes, flax and other goodies in it, but we had no milk – in our case Almond milk as I can’t drink cow’s milk. By the way, we also were out of coffee that morning, so it was off to a great start.

But, I remember I stared down at my granola and thought, “There is nothing for breakfast.” Looking back at that very silly thought, I now realized that most certainly there was breakfast. I was looking down at a bowl of granola. It just didn’t have milk to make it more interesting. The Kind bar I later got at Starbucks I now

realize was the exact same thing as the granola that had no milk. My mind was not very creative that day. Needless to say, I was focused upon scarcity.

Slide: Wedding at Cana

Mary, the mother of Jesus turns to her son and says the four words that no one at a wedding ever hopes to hear: “They have no wine.” At a wedding in the ancient world, such a possibility would have been unfortunate for the bride and groom. They would have looked like a couple of scarcity. While as today, many a wedding reception needn’t include wine, as mine did not, and I have attended other receptions where there was no wine, it simply was not done during the day of Jesus. There was always wine at a wedding celebration...always.

Yet, in Mary’s statement to her son, I hear my own voice in what it means. Hers is also a statement of scarcity. They have no wine. What will they do? It is a familiar fear...not about having wine,

but about having. Will I have enough? Are we running out? Are we wealthy enough, safe enough, and good enough? Will we go over our budget? Will we run out? We have no...fill in the blank.

Slide: parched land

Mary's statement is not just a matter of fact thing to say: "They have no wine." It's a statement of scarcity. What are we going to do about not having what that couple now needs?" Who are these moochers and wedding crashers who came who were not invited? How could this couple not be prepared enough to consider that this could happen? And, as always, our Lord answers with abundance. He makes wine where there was none. As usual, we find out what abundance truly is from God and that it is enough.

But, how much is enough? I imagine that it a vastly different question in our government right now, and in Great Britain, not to mention Yemen or Nairobi, or Indonesia, where earthquake

after earthquake happen. If Mary had been in Haiti or maybe in Puerto Rico, no doubt she would simply have turned to Jesus and said, "They have nothing." The scarcity of those starving in Yemen is vast in comparison to anything we live through even at these strange and problematic times for our country.

Slide: apple orchard

But this question of abundance is an important one, not only as we look at our checkbooks, not only as we feel we can rest now because we ended our budget here well, when in reality, we have a challenge to be faithful all year; it is important to wonder at what abundance is as we relate it to scarcity, but also as we see ourselves in the world. What truly is abundance according to the economic world standards? RCU Credit Union, West Wisconsin and Citi Bank may have a different view of abundance than you or I, and especially what God determines is abundance.

And, because we are speaking here in this Gospel reading about the Christian life, abundance is not always about quantity, but quality. What is the good life according to faith? Well, is it about numbers, percentages, and stuff...or is it about what God intends? Maybe God's abundance ought not to be about our attitudes of scarcity but rather about our attitudes on abundance. Are we able to see what God actually does give, even when our lives are difficult, even when sorrow enters in, even when the bills can't be paid? In what way does God give abundance to wake us up from our views on scarcity - what is enough and what isn't?

Slide: Babette's Feast

One of my most favorite movies of all time is probably one you've not heard of. It's a pretty old movie now and it's not even American. It's a Danish film called Babette's Feast. Babette's Feast is a sweet story placed in a desolate and tiny village on the Jutland Peninsula in Denmark. The drama revolves

around two sisters around the end of the 19th century, who are the daughters of a Lutheran pastor. After their father's death, the two sisters take on the pastoral care of the elderly and they bring the community together for Bible Study and weekly prayer.

Into their lives comes Babette, who had to leave her home in Paris for political reasons. She comes to live with them as their cook. Now these sisters didn't expect much since they ate the same meal every day-boiled dried fish and ale bread. For a Parisian woman, this was not considered good, so Babette would spice it up in small ways and seek to make the food more interesting.

Another part of the story comes in our learning that in the everyday routine of life, personal relationships can become strained and difficult. One of the sisters has already said no to marriage to two different men. Two old friends tell each other what they really think about one another. A husband and wife become engaged in angry

conversation. This all happens where? At the table gatherings for prayer and Bible study. Babette from the kitchen hears this.

Suddenly, Babette comes to find that she is the winner of a lottery and receives 10,000 francs. The sisters feel sure she will now be leaving them. Her response is quite different. She tells them she will be offering a banquet-a feast. The food comes from abroad. The delivery is quite uncommon for the community. The table is laid with linen, china, crystal, and silver.

It is an incredible meal, the likes of which most of the diners have never had before. The wines, the soup, the quail, the roasted suckling pig, the cheeses and fruits, the dessert give to each person a new lease on life. The argument between the two men is resolved. The married couple is reunited in their love for one another. Babette's feast offers them something they have never had before – abundance which satisfied and at the same time offered

faith and friendship like they had never known before.

Slide: Wine into a cup

It's no small wonder that Babette's Feast is an analogy for this first sign Jesus performs, this wine sign that displays the surprising but also mysterious miracle that is wine out of water. In fact, when looking upon this sign, one might first look at it from a position of scarcity – why waste a miracle on helping out two kids who didn't plan their wedding well? Why spend a miracle on that? Jesus so much as gives us that commentary to his mother, 'what does it have to do with us,' he said. It's almost as if he knows what we are thinking before we think it.

Slide: lavender

In this first sign that Jesus performs at that little village of Cana, the abundance of God flows into a life practice – a faith practice that we humans need reminding of always: that abundance is not about things or about having. It is about

our perception of abundance and looking for and acting upon the abundance that God has already given to us in the person of Jesus Christ. What better start to a new year and a new church budget than this miracle story today? Think of the possibilities before us in practicing and trusting in this abundance, so that not only may we be satisfied at the feast, we spread that abundance to others who need it.