**Springfield Presbyterian Church**

**January 23rd, 2022**

**A Miraculous Party**

1. Mother and Son

 I love to see the interaction between mother and son, Mary and

Jesus, at this traditional Jewish wedding. Mary, who is interestingly never referred to by name in this Gospel, is prodding her son. She sees a problem here, and in the context of the day, it’s a major issue of hospitality – the wine has run out. A Jewish wedding would not simply be a one-day affair, but a seven-day celebration. If these huge wine jugs are empty…the celebration stops, the party is over, and the societal implications are going to be tough for the bride and groom.

 So mom knows her son, she knows what he can do, and so she

prods, like any good mother does, for him to do the ‘right thing’ - she says, “They have no wine.” In our modern day lives, whether it’s been our mom or dad or another figure, we know that prod – “go help with the dishes”, “make sure grandma safely gets to her car”, and “those folks over there need some help.” And you know, lovingly, the face that mom makes – the mom face – where no matter whether you are joyful or cranky, you are going to listen to mom.

 And then Jesus, says something that initially looks rude when

he says, “Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.” In this translation, my mom would lovingly give me that mom look again – the ‘check your tone’ look. But there’s more to these words than the translation offers. When Jesus says ‘woman’ – he is not being rude, but in the Greek, it is just a simple distinction of who he is speaking to and when he says his hour has not yet come – he is conveying that he doesn’t sense that God is calling him to do something at this time.”

 I believe there’s something humorous that is missing within

the text, because Mary’s next move is to go over to the chief steward and say, “Do whatever he tells you.” Mary must have convinced him, someway, somehow, and kept nudging at that divine reluctance until Jesus decided that this is what he was called to do.

1. Prayer as a Holy Nudge

 Oh, sometimes we need to nudge. Sometimes I’m asked, ‘what does prayer really do’ and this passage reminds me that when we pray, we are ‘prayerfully nudging’ God with our concerns and joys. We ultimately know that God’s will will be done, but when we come together to pray, we are nudging – we are saying, “God, this is important to us. I need you to hear it. I need your help.” While we pray, our holy nudges might be answered or might not be answered the way we wish, but the holy nudge is important – it keeps us in relationship with God who hears what lies on our hearts and minds.

1. The Tension

But here’s the elephant in the room, the tension that lies in the

text that we somehow need to make some sense of to be able to live into the Word. If Jesus is so inclined and abundantly generous…what do we do when we look around our world and see places that need that generosity so deeply. There’s wine for the party, but not enough food for a single dad and his child. To the modern ear, the wine, though nice, seems frivolous when you compare it to the hurting hearts of our society. What do you make of a God who is willing to do this miracle but, simply by appearance, leaves others suffering? How do you begin to reconcile it?

 And the other tension that lies here on the surface is one I alluded to before – what if your Holy Nudge or prayer doesn’t work. What if it feels like God isn’t answering or even harder for our souls, the answer is ‘no.’

 As a faithful pastor, I have to name the tension, even though I’d like to go and party like the folks at this marriage scene at Cana. How do I, how do you, get past these tensions to see God’s call to celebration in this text?

 Well, here’s the rub – the tension is there and I cannot and will not pretend to have answers to such tough questions. I believe, I hope, someday I can have a cup of tea with Jesus and ask some of these questions, but I know that on this veil, on this side of my very human life, I won’t know. I don’t know why God sometimes says no, but I have faith, even when I’m angry and yelling and frustrated, that at the heart of it, God is up to something that I don’t understand.

 I have a hard time understanding why God would fill jars with wine but not help the single parent who needs to feed a child, but a reflection I’ve heard does compel me to another answer. God could come down and ask me, “Why aren’t you helping the single parent? I’ve called you as a disciple to do this good work in the world, you are led by my Spirit, this is work I am calling you to.” And you know what, yes, there’s some things only God can do and yes I am not responsible for saving the world, but instead of sitting in a corner, I can be out there in our world living the life of a rebellious disciple, being called to something more.

 While we might be able to each come up with our own understandings on the tensions that exist, we do need to live with them in the Word. They are there to teach us, challenge us, and compel us forward to seeking a deeper faith.

1. Out of the Tension

And as we live that life of deeper faith, I think we can all live a

deeper life of joy, celebration, and abundance. I remember one Sunday bringing balloons to the church in the pulpit, reminding us that we are called to joy. Sunday doesn’t have to be boring, it doesn’t need to be dry and serious, there is a call for this joy that we see in Cana. There’s a call for laughter, a call to bless one another, a call to remember that we are God’s own and that is a grand celebration.

 When we think about all the signs or miracles that Jesus did throughout his ministry on Earth, we see that Jesus celebrated people. He celebrated marriage, he celebrated people being healed, he celebrated by sharing meals with others. This joyful feast at Cana is still a constant sign and reminder that we are to rejoice in the people of God and to toast the world with the amazing good news of grace.

 As I was reading some commentary on our passage for today, I wanted to share with you this phrase that I want to use more frequently in my life. When we think about how Jesus enters our lives, when we consider what God is doing in this world, one of the writers said that we are “unpredictably invaded by grace.” Grace shows up. Mercy shows up. Often when we least expect it. It’s a beautiful and glorious thing to be more aware and more present to that grace invading our lives and our world and to find joy in it.

1. What we have learned

I feel like I’ve covered a bunch of touchpoints here in this

sermon, so I think it’s important to give the cliffnotes version. So, here’s some fun notes to remember this week:

1. Jesus listened to his mom – sometimes we need to listen to those who guide us. Mom’s in the congregation, feel free to use this reminder at home – I’ve got your back.
2. When we pray, we are giving God a holy nudge, a reminder of what is important to us and we stay in relationship with God.
3. There is and will always be tension when we read Scripture, and while that can be really challenging to move forward with, it also lets us dig deeper in our faith and opens us up to asking God hard questions.
4. And finally, my favorite – for goodness sakes, especially in these times, this passage calls us to fun. So go have some fun. Remember that God wants you to enjoy this life he’s given you, remember you are God’s own, and go live and rejoice in that. Being a follower of Christ is often bundled up in seriousness, but we’re called to a balanced life – Christ wants you to delight in this life. So, my friends, may we not be afraid to jump into joy and live into brighter days. Amen.