



Rockway and First (North Pelham) Pastoral Charge  
 Sunday January 16, 2022  
 Worship at Home Resource

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Our sincere thanks to Reverend Martin Wehrmann  
 for preparing the Worship at Home resource

Welcome to another Sunday worship in this new year! I'm honoured to be able to send this worship into your home while we can't be together in God's House. Remember that Jesus had said: "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them." Before teaching his disciples his own prayer, Jesus also said: "... go into your room and shut the door, and pray ..." Our all-loving, all-knowing, ever-present God is with you now, as always. Amen

Why not now look at the words of the hymn 'Open my eyes, that I may see' (#500)  
 Music by Clara H. Scott

*The first verse goes like this:* Open my eyes, that I may see glimpses of truth thou hast for me, place in my hands the wonderful key that shall unclasp and set me free.

R. Silently now I wait for thee, ready my God, thy will to see,  
 open my eyes; illumine me, Spirit divine! (\* sing more verses if you know them)

Please join me in praying this prayer:

All-loving, all-knowing, ever-present God, I thank you that we can be together with You and with one another as members of your Church, and as a brother or sister of Jesus, your Son, too.

Some of us are very alone today. Our 'room' or chamber is very empty and quiet.

Sometimes I get discouraged because it's so quiet. – But in prayer, I feel better. I know You are listening Lord God. I know Your Holy Trinity is with me, sharing in my prayer, and reminding me of your love for me regardless of what my world around me tells me – either by the way I'm treated or by the way I'm overlooked or avoided . (pause)

Some of us are overwhelmed today, although it is Sunday, because of all the work we have to do. Others take a holy day off. I have to cook and clean up. When I have a chance to rest – I can't seem to settle.

God, help me to find You. I ask You to give me your Peace. Give me the strength I need for today. – God, I thank you for my family and for my work, but I *do* need your help and strength.

... I am not as well as I used to be --

God we haven't even talked about what I've done wrong this week; about my feelings of anger and resentment ... We haven't even talked about what I didn't do for You and for someone else – although I had the best intentions! God: please forgive me. God, my own

sins threaten to overwhelm me sometimes and I can't even think about other people!  
 Lord, can You have mercy on me? (silent pause) Amen

Friend in Christ, remember what the Church has said to you so often: “Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us.”

**Christ Jesus** chooses to forgive you.

Believe this assurance of God's love. – Some say: 'Accept this assurance of God's *forgiveness*'. I choose to say to you: 'Be assured of God's *love*.' – For me they are both the same. But for your hurting soul this word of love may be just the balm your soul needs to heal. Amen

Now, please take a few minutes to read God's Word in the Bible. Listen to what God's Word from Isaiah 62:1-5 says. In particular, does it **speak to you** in the last verses when it talks about forsaken Israel being renamed 'my delight is in her' and 'married'? Read and reflect as if **God is speaking to you** directly and not to an ancient people long ago. In these verses God's prophet is foretelling that the people's fortunes will be completely reversed! *We* live in a *free* society, but think of our pandemic as one of the burdens we need lifted from our shoulders to again live with hope. What other burdens do *you* need help with?

Also read the familiar Gospel passage in John 2, verses one to eleven. Take a moment to remember what you learned about this story in Sunday school. What was the main point of the story or the main person in the story as you remember it – *if you did learn it*? Maybe you had a Bible-story-book with pictures showing the big water jugs that the story speaks about?

Now, are you ready to think a bit more deeply about this Word of God given for **you**, **today** to nurture your faith more?

Our message for the third Sunday in the new year (2022)

Jesus at a wedding at Cana, with his mother and [some] disciples present –  
 John's Gospel, chapter 2, verses one to eleven

Most readers of the fourth Gospel (John's Gospel) have noticed that it begins differently than the others. It initially 'mirrors' the creation story of the first book of the Bible in that it is also divided into 'days' in which God reveals something about God's self, appealing to Jewish readers perhaps, who know that story from their Holy Book. Some scholars say John's choice of 'language' intends us to see God in Jesus right away. God is among us in Jesus! – In our case today, we are witnessing the 'third day' in *John's story about Jesus; God's Logos or Word, is made visible in Jesus the man*. But the 'parallels' to the Genesis account (about first things, in the Bible) do seem different. When God had collected the waters into their designated places and dry land appeared – and God made vegetation grow, and plants yielded seeds, and fruit-trees grew. ... And it was all good, we hear the narrator of **Genesis** say: “And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.”

It's probably all right for **John** to use Jesus' experience at the wedding at Cana for

his 'third day' account. There too, was water, and much delicious food, to be sure – I read that ancient Jewish weddings often lasted a week and one poured everything one had, into pleasing one's guests! And there were guests at the wedding – so many -- that the wine quickly gave out!

How come??

In Genesis, chapter 1, we have a narrator retelling what generations of Jews and Christians have come to believe as the beginning of our covenant relationship with God: God provides abundantly for God's Creation! God made everything 'good' [ie. without flaw or 'glitch']. But, it also tells of the beginning of sin in the world in chapters 2 to 4. It speaks of the swift rejection of God's guiding Words and grace and abundant provisions, showered upon humans, who seemed quickly to have lost their 'worthiness' of God's love – and before the 'week of creation' was just a vague memory, we already read of a murder!

Could any of this 'belong together' with John's story? Might John be adding a chapter to an already well-known story – offering up a new 'ending'? \* The Book of Revelation says we can't add anything to God's Word [as we have received it. Rev.22:18].

We know from history that God's people continued their 'on again, off again' relationship with God forever after. It could be said, or so it appears, that when the wine gave out at the wedding at Cana the celebration of the relationship between God's people and God was also breaking up – historically speaking! As always, it wasn't in our human power to 'fix' it!

As always, after some brief reflection, the 'guys in charge', probably some old trusted servants, (the commentaries think) like the leaders in charge anywhere) probably never admitted that **they** had caused the problem; the breakdown with the refreshments and the 'inconvenience' to the guests, and so we have to ask: *were they now ready to listen to anybody that sounded like they could help?* – But it was really too late! Here at Cana – they had misplanned and miscalculated the cost of the celebration -- or the number of guests – or their appetite for wine! \* If the sign at Cana is really a parable of human disobedience and mismanagement and the broken relationship with God: would they stop and listen to God now? Could God and humanity ever come together again!?"

**John the Evangelist says 'yes'.**

The message comes from a few unlikely sources though: from a woman who was probably just a poor old maid by now. From a poor young man; her son, a guest – but we don't even know why he was invited. Was he a guest of a neighbour – Nathanael maybe? -- The *servants* obeyed him when he finally did give them his *crazy* instructions: to fill the wash-bowls with water and to bring a few samples to the steward of the feast [the old guys in charge], to taste them, before serving them to the guests as WINE!

Yes, the wedding celebration was effectively over when the [original] wine [covenant with Israel] ran out. In our time and understanding, one might say the 'doomsday clock' had struck '12'. And yet there were voices that said it doesn't have to end this way: Mary's voice, Jesus' voice, – would the chief steward see and taste and believe what those other voices told him; that the wedding celebration is just *beginning* – *or at least it can continue?! The crisis can be averted! God has restored the fortunes of God's people as the prophets repeatedly assert, and as the psalms sing about! Israel's old covenant with*

God had run out; their rituals of cleansing no longer sufficient, had run out. \* But **Jesus brought a promise of new joy, and Jesus 'saved the day'** in a very profound way – that is – the Evangelist John is telling us that **God's nurturing love does not run out!** It's *our* love that keeps running dry! The great God of Creation is among the wedding guests at Cana and is forever with us, *if we will listen and follow; drop our pride and logic and stop calculating that we can 'party on' for another 30 years before the air and the water and the food and the grace of God run out –*

In baseball, three strikes puts the batter 'out' of the game. In bowling a 'strike' is a good thing!?\* God doesn't keep score! We have created the 'doomsday clock', yet God has shown us time and time again that God's mercy never ends!

\* The result of this miracle at Cana was that Jesus' disciples believed in him! The text says “Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.”

\* Jesus' glory was revealed on that third day as God's glory is revealed every day to those who will see it and believe. Jesus didn't perform this miracle so people could get on with it and get 'drunker'. As at creation and as at His baptism – Jesus was doing God's bidding, and that's why he was glorified!!

According to Genesis, chapter 1, God revealed God's glory, beginning with the creation of the heavens, the earth and all life ... and *ever since* God's glory amazes us, when we care to see and listen and follow God's life-giving Word. Sadly, the struggle between evil and our egos has also continued ever since; so the story tells us! Over and over again God saves God's people and creatures and nature. Over and over God used ordinary people – shepherds and inn-keepers, fishermen and women of no special account – to bring us God's message of salvation. – Any day, every day, any time is a good time to listen to God's LOGOS (Jesus) and to follow God's Word. Even those who have no knowledge of Jewish biblical history or who cannot fully understand how God could become a man and save the world – without being one of the great Marvel super heroes – can understand what happened at that wedding at Cana and what a marvel it must have seemed to everyone that, after a brief pause in the refreshments – the celebration could go on Because of God! Because God loves God's creation. Because we are God's creation. Because we are worthy of this good news – GOD said NO to the 'obvious' end of the marriage feast!

God has given each of us another day to listen to God and to believe in God's Son.

\*The 'fourth day' is assured by God. But what will **you** do with it? Amen

Spend a bit of time in prayer with God.

Does this hymn have any special meaning for you after you read today's meditation:  
“What does the Lord require of you” (#709)

1. What does the Lord require of you? What does the Lord require of you?
2. Justice, kindness walk humbly with your God.
3. To seek justice, and love kindness, and walk humbly with your God.

This hymn is a Round. On Wednesday the Women's Missionary Society 'Come Together' on-line event included it. When sung as a Round it can sound very confusing! One can

easily miss its important message! \*This reminded me of another hymn too, that has often given me great personal comfort: “When voices are confusing” (#636) Tune: Wolvercote

Its first line goes like this: 'When voices are confusing, when right and wrong are blurred, we need your help in choosing the way to be preferred; our feet are prone to wander in paths untrue, untried; O Christ, our strong commander, become our trusted guide. \* Maybe you have a hymnbook at home or even know its three verses by heart? You can look it up online too. Its author Mary Drury was still alive when our current Book of Praise was printed. She must have had a good grasp of the situation you and I are living in. May this be encouraging for **you** too.

Let's pray, beginning with **Jesus' own prayer; the Lord's prayer**. Say it any way you learned it or remember it. Speak it out loudly or softly to yourself, and speak it from your heart. *Continue in prayer with me reading these words to guide you:*

Living God, our heavenly Father; kind and generous parent. Through the sacrifice of your own Son Jesus you have taken me back as your beloved child too. It doesn't matter how imperfect I am. It doesn't matter that I am old now. What alone matters is that You love me as much as always! Thank You for being my God and my heavenly Father too. Some will call You 'Parent' instead of 'father', because they have had a harsh father. Some are afraid of You because of the way they've been treated by authority-figures. Some believe they can't talk openly with You God, because we are only creatures and You are all-powerful ... and so on and so on –

God, today I learned that *how we respond* to what is going on around us – can make a big difference! I am reminded to 'listen' for Your guiding Word when the crowds around me and the crises of my life want to muffle Your Word – and to smother me – so all Your goodness poured out for me – will fall at my feet, unnoticed – But God, your Jesus taught me to pray & to be bold in speaking with you. Commercials, advertising for lotto-winnings ... entice me to gamble 'big' so I can win big in this world – but they're really designed to benefit those who 'sell' those lottery-tickets! **You Lord God**, promise everyone your love and your blessing and your care, regardless of who we are. I am just me. I am like Mary and like your Son's disciples. I'm imperfect like the steward at that wedding celebration – *but* I'm also one of those fortunate guests who rubs shoulders with my Lord Jesus every day!! How wonderful! How comforting that You are here, with me! Thank You God for reminding me that YOU, in Your Holy Trinity, are looking after me and caring for all my loved ones and looking after my world that is in great peril just now.

– God, I don't want to sound selfish by talking about myself so much. I know my world is sick and many helpless people die daily, from the pandemic, but also from so many other illnesses and natural calamities and from crime and from starvation! Lord God, help us.

– I pray for my Church; for Your Church in all the world, which is attacked in some places & in some lands the people are too poor to rebuild what wars and hard times have destroyed. God: build Your Church in all our hearts. Build it strong, so we can help, support and encourage one another for as long as life exists.

– I pray for the children returning to their class-rooms tomorrow. God, I worry for them. I worry for their families who worry – I worry for their teachers and friends – I worry for everyone who frequently has to mix with people at work or in stores, in hospitals, or as street workers with the homeless. I worry for the homeless not knowing whether they will be well tomorrow?

– All-merciful, all-knowing God, put my fears and worries to rest for everyone, including for my own loved ones – and like in our Gospel for today, help me put my trust in You. Amen

God, because of your abundant love, answer my prayer. Amen

### **Can we talk a bit about an offering?**

Friend, and sister or brother in faith: They say 'grace is free'. Certainly God's blessings come without a price. But your little congregation does some 'big' work in our communities. Some wonderful people maintain the church buildings and some wonderful people give much of themselves to provide leadership, pastoral care and are available any time to help you.

*If you are able to make a donation to your church, please consider it. Your caring & your gifts **are** greatly appreciated. Thank you.*

May the blessing of God be upon you and upon the gifts that you share. Amen

Do you know this short chant: 'Live in charity' (#501) transl. By the Taize community (France)

Live in charity and steadfast love;

live in charity: God will dwell with you. \* You can try to sing it to any tune that works. It's a chant so it doesn't have to have many 'ups' or 'downs'.

\*\* Another great song to sing or just to think on as you end your Sunday worship, is this hymn: 'Lord, thy word abideth' (#502) Music: Ravenshaw

Lord, thy word abideth, and our footsteps guideth; who its truth believeth light and joy receiveth.

v.6 Oh that we, discerning its most holy learning, Lord may love and fear thee, evermore be near thee. (Amen)

Before you close down your computer or put down the paper this worship is printed on, please also read these closing words directed to God in gratitude for our time together:

Lord God; Holy Ghost, be praised. Be praised by me, your child and believer.

Lord Jesus, be praised. Be praised for your sacrifice of love and forgiveness for me.

Our heavenly Father, One God in three persons: To You be given all glory and praise, on earth and in heaven; now and forever. Amen

## Announcements:

- After prayerful consideration, the Sessions have decided to continue with suspended in person worship services for the rest of January. At this time it is our hope and intention to return to in person worship on Sunday February 6, 2022 with Rev. Pearl at North Pelham. As always we will do our best to keep everyone updated if decisions change - Thank you all for your patience!
- Annual Reports and Meeting - at this time the Annual Meeting for both churches will be Sunday March 20<sup>th</sup> following worship. Church groups are asked to have their annual reports submitted to Janice Aulph or Bonnie Roland by Sunday February 6<sup>th</sup>. Annual reports will be distributed on Sunday March 6, 2022.
- Vacancy Update - just a few words to update - The Raynard family has finished at the manse. The process has started to form a Search Committee with the hopes of being able to have a first meeting in the not too distant future. Please keep this process in your prayers

## Moment for Mission – Sunday January 16, 2022

In Haiti, Wilner used to harvest very little, no matter how hard he worked his field. **So, in 2017, Wilner joined an agroforestry program where he received training and learned sustainable agriculture techniques to conserve the soil in his fields and increase crop yields.** His crop yields have now increased, and he has a greater variety of food available for him and his family. Today, Wilner has a beautiful garden with diverse crops, such as corn, pigeon peas, yam, taro, squash, okra, spinach, and forest and fruit trees. This has helped Wilner afford to pay the school fees for his four children and support his family's other needs as well. This sustainable agriculture project is supported by Presbyterian World Service & Development in collaboration with Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

