

*This message was prepared by Rev. Pamela Graf Short for the People of Prayer at the Tontogany Presbyterian Church for Sunday, January 27 in the year of our LORD 2019. It is based on the following texts:*

## **I Corinthians 12**

- 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.
- 12** For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.
- 13** For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.
- 14** Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many.
- 15** If the foot would say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body.
- 16** And if the ear would say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body.
- 17** If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be?
- 18** But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as God chose.
- 19** If all were a single member, where would the body be?
- 20** As it is, there are many members, yet one body.
- 21** The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you."
- 22** On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable,
- 23** and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect;
- 24** whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member,
- 25** that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another.
- 26** If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.
- 27** Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.
- 28** And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues.
- 29** Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles?
- 30** Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?
- 31** But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way

## **I Corinthians 13**

- 1** If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.
- 2** And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.
- 3** If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.
- 4** Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant
- 5** or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful;
- 6** it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth.
- 7** It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.
- 8** Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end.
- 9** For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part;
- 10** but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end.
- 11** When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways.
- 12** For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.
- 13** And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

## **John 2:1-11**

- 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.

**I**n Our Bible stories for today there are gifts and celebrations, wedding and wine.

It is an interesting combination of stories.

In Cana a couple is beginning a life together;

likewise in Corinth a church is just starting out,

trying to figure how it is that they can thrive together as a community of faith.

In one story the wine is running short;

in the other, there seems to be no end of gifts.

Perhaps we can assume that the connecting factor between the two stories is love.

For the sake of Mary's love for the newlyweds,  
she draws Jesus into his first official miracle.

For the sake of Jesus' love for his mother, he obeys. For the sake of Paul's love for the church,  
he goes on and on and on as only Paul can about gifts and services and activities and bodies and clothing and  
functions and then places it all into the greatest gift basket of all--Love.

In the wedding story we read:

*"When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, 'They have no wine.'" (John 2:3)*

After the year of our LORD 2018,  
it would be easy for you to say "we have no wine";  
we are depleted,  
run short,  
the party is pretty much over.  
It was a year of suffering and death;  
funerals, not weddings;  
tears of sorrow, not celebration.  
No baptisms; no confirmations.

But wait! 4 days before the end of the year Lana Elaine sneaks into our world.  
God gives us a little tiny clue that love is on the way. On the one hand, we don't expect anything of her,  
yet we love her nonetheless.  
On the other hand, like hope,  
we expect everything for her.

In the wedding story we hear the steward say

*"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."  
(John 2:10)*

You have kept the good wine until now.

What if, wedding guests,  
God has kept the good wine until now?  
By suggesting this, I do not mean in any way  
to disparage those who have gone before us,  
for without their faithfulness we would surely not be here.  
What I am suggesting is that with the power of Jesus in our midst,  
the power to change the ordinary into the extraordinary;  
the power to fill us with living water  
and serve us up to a world desperately in need of celebration,  
is it possible that the best is yet to come?  
What if, because like Mary,  
you ask Jesus for a great gift,  
not for yourselves,  
but for your world,  
your school district,  
your workplace,  
your town,  
your neighborhood?

What if Jesus responds with  
“my hour is not yet come”  
and instead of saying,  
“Okay, well, it was a nice thought”,  
you live as Mary lived and say to one another,  
“Do whatever he tells you.”

What if you believe in the face of depletion that for the sake of love,  
Jesus will actually respond to your observation  
“We have no wine”?

What if you believe that God will not only fill you up again, Tontogany,  
but that Jesus will literally transform you into the finest of wine that will surprise your world  
and delight your guests?

“Do whatever he tells you.”

There is an element of cooperation in the story. Standing there waiting to be filled were 6 stone jars.  
The jars may have been depleted by the bride and groom as they ceremoniously washed before their wedding,  
or even by the guests as they took out a cup of water and washed before prayer and before and after meals.

Whatever the case,  
the jars are not as full as they once were  
and so Jesus tells them, “Fill ‘em up”.  
Keep in mind they have no tap water.  
How long it took to go back and forth from the wedding to the well, we are not told.  
What the servants were thinking as they carried bucket after bucket we are not told.  
We are told they filled them to the brim.

What if in 2019 the Holy Spirit fills you to the brim?  
What would that mean for you personally to be filled to the brim?  
As satisfying as that sounds,  
the purpose was not to be full,  
the purpose was not even to be transformed.  
The purpose was to be draw out of;  
to be carried to those in need of honor and celebration; to be drawn out for the sake of love.

Is your family depleted?  
Are your co-workers empty?  
Are your students drained?  
Are your friends used up?  
Do you love them?  
Do you care that they are honored instead of gossiped about?  
Celebrated instead of mocked?  
It could be that for their sake,  
God is transforming you into the most excellent gift of all. The gift from above.  
We can have faith.  
We can live with hope.  
But the greatest of these is love.

Now may our God of love  
Fill you to the brim with refreshing grace  
Transform you for sweet celebration  
Draw you out in surprising wonder  
And serve you to your world in  
Goodness, Honor, Holiness and Joy  
Now and forevermore.  
Amen