

Guess what?

This sermon is a continuation.

Like a sermon part deux

—as the French would say.

In a way, it is a sequel to a sermon

I've already preached.

And what sermon is that you might ask?

One I preached in January of this year.

Bear with me for a moment

because it is possible

that some of you weren't here

in the sanctuary that day.

Some of you might have missed

that January 20th sermon

—and before you get nervous,

no, I'm not going to re-preach it.

But months ago the lectionary

listed John 2:1-11 as that Sunday's text.

That scripture describes the first sign Jesus performs

—John remember doesn't call them miracles

but calls them signs in his gospels.

Signs, so that you will know,

that Jesus is the Christ.

In that story we encounter Jesus' first sign,

the turning water into wine

at the wedding of Cana.

I believe that is a post resurrection story,

inserted back into the

beginning of Jesus' ministry.

It was a story

with an abundance of wine.

Remember how there were 7 jars of water

for the Jewish rite of purification

and Jesus changes all that water into wine

—meaning about 750 bottles of wine!

So much wine

it is an obvious exaggeration.

But this story of the abundance of wine
would have reminded the people
of the promise of God
throughout the Old Testament
of the feast that God was planning.

The well-strained wines, running clear.
The cups that overflow
when kingdom of God came in fullness.

Those feasts are the promise
of the messianic banquets.

John says that Jesus did this,
the first of his signs in Cana of Galilee:
this is where the sign revealed
his glory and his disciples believed in him.”

This was John’s signal,
a sign of the Messiah;
he is present;
here is the feast;
and there is more than enough.

Of course an often overlooked detail
is that story of the wedding of Cana
took place, *on the third day*, the scripture says
—which I think is a textual nod
to this sign being a hint
for what is expected
in the kingdom of God.

In the new age,
in the post resurrection world,
where you might at first see scarcity,
a sign of God’s messianic promise of abundance
is fulfilled not later
or in the future,
but right now.

And this story,
 this breakfast on the beach with Jesus
 is the last sign in John's gospel.
 The themes are similar.

Another feast of different sorts.
 One where there isn't much of anything
 until Jesus shows up.
 *"Children, you have no fish, have you?
 Cast your nets to the right side of the boat,
 and you will find some."*¹

There is such tender prodding in this story.
 Jesus had shown himself earlier
 to the disciples while they were hiding
 behind locked doors in Jerusalem.
 And he breathes on them
 and then explains their new mission,
 'as the Father has sent me so I send you.'
 Yet we find them fishing,
 on the Sea of Galilee
 like they've always done.

Isn't it interesting
 that for all that happened before Jesus died,
 there are so many stories
 about his life, what he said, who we ate with,
 where he was walking to.
 But in all of our gospels,
 after Jesus is raised from the dead,
 there is surprisingly little.²
 John as a gospel is the only one
 who has this story,
 the last of the signs in his book.

All in all, in terms of reporting words
 or events that took place
 after that first Easter Sunday,

¹ John 21:5-6

² Scott Hoezee, John 21:1-19 https://cep.calvinseminary.edu/sermon-starters/easter-3c/?type=the_lectionary_gospel

Matthew contains 5 verses,
Mark contains 0 verses,
and Luke contains 4 verses.
You might be thinking hold on now,
what about the story of Emmaus,
well, that took place on Easter Sunday in Luke.
And Mark's gospel originally ends
with the women fleeing in fear.

Yet John contains 33 verses,
including one brief story that happened
1 week after the resurrection
("Doubting" Thomas's encounter with Jesus)
and then an entire chapter
of something that happened
at an unspecified post-Easter time
(but that happened presumably
some weeks later into the 40 days
between Easter and Ascension).

John wins hands down
in terms of the post-Easter Jesus.
And yet look at what he gives us:
Jesus tending a campfire on a beach.³

As far as miracles or signs go,
this one isn't so spectacular.
Earlier Jesus feeds 5000 people
with five loaves and two fish.
Here it is 7 people with 153 fish.
A tad strange.
You have to wonder why Jesus is here,
at the Sea of Galilee
and not popping in on
Herod Antipas or Pilate.
Why isn't Jesus appearing
in front of the Temple authorities
and high priest?

³ ibid

Why wasn't he out curing leprosy,
gout, children born
with lame legs and withered hands?⁴
Why is this last sign?
This catch of fish,
these questions to Peter
—why this ending?

John's gospel is bookended
by themes of abundance
in the midst of everyday life.
Weddings, dinner tables, and campfires.
These are ordinary, everyday aspects of life where,
when Christ is present,
there is grace upon grace,
as John 1:16 says.⁵

In the joy of the wedding,
Jesus is present.
In the midst of fear and locked doors,
Jesus is present.
When you have burning questions
in the middle of the night,
you, like Nicodemus can find Jesus.

And even when you have been tasked
to go out and free the oppressed
and heal the sick like Jesus
but find yourself in the dole drums
of your everyday job,
fishing and cleaning the nets,
Jesus is there.

These are the nature
of the signs of the Messiah.
This is a good news retelling
that shows us that the good news

⁴ ibid

⁵ <http://www.saltproject.org/progressive-christian-blog/2019/4/30/love-in-action-salts-lectionary-commentary-for-easter-3>

begins and ends
with recognizing Christ in your midst
and that means there is an abundance present.

That is the gospel *inside us*,
that is bursting with grace upon grace.
We are not all going to be Billy Graham
and Mother Theresa;
we will not all be Martin Luther King Jr.
and Beth Moore.
Instead, we will be like guests
invited to a wedding;
like these fishermen turned disciple,
Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, James and John.
We will be normal and everyday
and still we find ourselves
in the presence and glory of Christ
because of the power of the gospel in us.

When Jesus questions Peter three times,
we often think he is forgiving Peter
or counter acting Peter's painful threefold denial.
But in John's gospel,
Peter is not asked, 'do you know the man?'
that is the question
in the other 3 gospels.
"Rather, in the Fourth Gospel,
the inquiry posed to Peter is,
"aren't you one of his disciples?"
Peter's response? "I AM not."⁶

Peter isn't denying Christ,
Peter is denying *his own identity* in Christ.⁷
He's denying the gospel's abundance
in himself.
And that is what Jesus reinstates
with his questions.

⁶ Karoline Lewis, John 21:1-19 <http://www.workingpreacher.org/craft.aspx?post=5320>

⁷ ibid

Peter if you love me,
then you will find your life
looking like mine.
If you love me,
in your life
you will do the things I did in my life.

And that means this is extended to us,
because this is a gospel
that was written back then for them
but also read, right now for us:
Christians if you love me,
you will look like me
—the good shepherd who takes care of the sheep.

It isn't extraordinary
in its simplicity.
It is the reminder
of the command of Jerusalem:
I am sending you out,
to look like me;
to act like me;
to love like me.

Not in big bullhorn ways.
Not in, the put a billboard up
about how much you love me.
I want you to be more like me
in your everyday life.

I want you to profess
who I am in your heart
with a kindness in your life
that others may not deserve;
with a forgiveness they may not merit;
with a love that no one can earn.

And I want you to serve the world
with my Christ-like imagination
that can take bread and fish

and make an abundance
—that can take bread and cup
and declare it a feast.

Jesus's breakfast on the beach
is a simple message of the good news
of the everyday.

These signs are meant,
as the beginning of John's gospel reminds us,
to reveal Christ's glory
and so that we might believe in him.

John reminds us twice that,
"Jesus did many other signs
in the presence of his disciples,
which are not written in this book.

But these are written
so you may come to believe
that Jesus is the Messiah,
the Son of God
and that through believing
you may have life in his name."

And again, "...there are many other things
that Jesus did;
if everyone of them were written down,
I suppose that the world itself
could not contain the books
that would be written."⁸

An everyday gospel
reminding us that even on the days
when nothing seems special,
the abundance of grace upon grace,
the abundance of the presence of Christ is in us.

⁸ John 20:30, & 21:34 NRSV

This is an everyday gospel
deep in us;
an identity that cannot be denied
—we are claimed and loved
as Christ's own;
and therefore sent out into the world
to look and act like him.

This is an everyday gospel
that will find us
celebrating communion for the first time
and proclaiming our faith publicly
as mature believers:
an abundance of Christ here
this morning in this place.

An everyday gospel that invites
to imagine *into* reality
a table that is big enough
and wide enough here,
to look like God's table everywhere.

I don't know about you,
but even though there are not a lot of stories
about what happened after
that Easter Sunday in our Bible

—the books of signs and miracles
that reveal Christ's presence and glory
so that we might believe in him,
— the books of signs that
are an abundance in our midst
the ones that are being written
right now, filling the world are:

Blake, Ryan, Tucker,
Beckett, Ryder, McKinley,
Nina, Larkin,

Maggie, Evan, Natalie,
Olivia, Charlie, Lilly,

Wilson, Kellen, Griffin,
Mollie, Henry, Langley,
Bennett, Virginia, and Parker

—just to name a few.