

Second Sunday after Epiphany 16 January 2022



This is the Kvindherred Church in Rosendal, Norway established in 1255. Many of our early pioneers were baptized and confirmed in this church. On leaving Norway, some of our people carried letters written by the Kvindherred pastor attesting to their membership.



Our Savior's Lutheran Church
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Service of Holy Communion

Evangelical Lutheran Worship, Setting 3

*The liturgy is in the front of the ELW with numbers at the bottom of the pages.
The hymns begin in the middle of the ELW with numbers at the top of the pages.*

Prelude

Ringing of the Bell

Welcome and Announcements

Confession and Forgiveness (pages 94-96)

P: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

P: God of all mercy and consolation, come to the help of your people, turning us from our sin to live for you alone. Give us the power of your Holy Spirit that we may confess our sin, receive your forgiveness, and grow into the fullness of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

C: Amen.

P: Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and one another.
There is a time of silence for reflection.

P: Most merciful God,

C: we confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen.

P: In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for his sake God forgives us all our sins. As a called and ordained minister of the church of Christ, and by his authority, I therefore declare to you the entire forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

Hymn #488 “Soul, Adorn Yourself with Gladness”

Greeting (page 138)

P: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C: And also with you.

Kyrie (pages 138-139; spoken responsively)

P: In peace, let us pray to the Lord.

C: Lord, have mercy.

P: For the peace from above, and for our salvation,
let us pray to the Lord.

C: Lord, have mercy.

P: For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the church of God, and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.

C: Lord, have mercy.

P: For this holy house, and for all who offer here their worship and praise, let us pray to the Lord.

C: Lord, have mercy.

P: Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord.

C: Amen.

Canticle of Praise: "This is the feast..." (pages 140-141)

Prayer of the Day

Readings

L: The Word of the Lord. **C: Thanks be to God.**

Gospel Acclamation (page 142)

Alleluia. Lord, to whom shall we go?

You have the words of eternal life.

Alleluia. Alleluia.

Gospel

P: The Holy Gospel according to John. **C: Glory to you, O Lord.**

P: The Gospel of the Lord. **C: Praise to you, O Christ.**

Children’s Sermon – Pastor Roberta

Sermon – Pastor Roberta

Hymn #312 “Jesus, Come! For We Invite You”

Confession of Faith: Nicene Creed (page 104)

**We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary
and became truly human.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

Prayers of Intercession

(Each petition ends: P: Merciful God,

C: receive our prayer.)

Offering

Great Thanksgiving (page 144; spoken responsively)

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Lift up your hearts.

C: We lift them to the Lord.

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

P: It is indeed right...and join their unending hymn:

"Holy, holy, holy Lord..." (page 144)

Words of Institution

Lord's Prayer (page 145)

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.**

Holy Communion is celebrated today.

*All who are baptized into Christ Jesus are invited to receive Holy Communion
Gluten-free wafers and white grape juice are available.*

"Lamb of God..." (page 146)

Hymn #487 "What Feast of Love"

**Post Communion Blessing & Prayer
Blessing**

Hymn #310 "Songs of Thankfulness and Praise"

Dismissal

P: Go in Peace. Share the gift of Jesus. **C: Thanks be to God!**

Ring of the Bell / Postlude

Pastor: Rev. Roberta Pierce
Organist: Jason Bousselot or Linda Whitman
Acolyte: Kara Olson
Lector: Dan Burke
Communion Assistant: Cindy Burke
Usher: Joe Morehead
Cleaners: Dan and Cindy Burke

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This Week At A Glance

Wednesday 6:00 pm Confirmation class at Faith
7:00 pm Bible Jam at Faith
Sunday 8:00 am Worship Service at Faith
9:25 am Sunday School at Our Savior's
10:30 am Worship Service at Our Savior's
am

Those to keep in prayer: The family of Clara Wilhelm, Yale Christensen, Paul Rock, Megan Mineck Wentland, Ryan Dick, Neil Mason, Betty Schau, Tim Burke, Jim Goddard, Barb Johnson; the homebound: Bus Seastrand, Rusty Porth, Hazel Richards, Ron Gasper, Norman Bousselot, Joan Shelton, and Myrna Kay Petersen; and those serving in the military.

Financial reports, budgets, and audit reports are due in the church office by Monday, January 17, 2022.

Annual Meetings will be held on Sunday, January 30, following the church service. No Sunday School will be held this Sunday.

Risky Symbols and Small Miracles

based on John 2:1-11; Isaiah 62:1-5

Rev. Karen A. Goltz

Today's gospel lesson is commonly recognized as the first of Jesus' public miracles. It was by this miracle that people sat up and took notice, and it was with this miracle that Jesus really began his ministry. Personally, my initial reaction to this is, what a waste of a miracle.

I mean, really! So the guests drank all the available wine at a wedding. Big deal. Would it have killed them to switch to water? If they were going through the wine so quickly maybe they *should* have switched to a non-alcoholic beverage! Was it so important that the guests be able to keep imbibing? If Jesus is going to perform his first public miracle, shouldn't it be to provide food for starving people, or healing for someone terminally ill? Why waste such a momentous event on something so mundane and unimportant?

I realize my personal bias is showing. But for me, wine is something that will cause no good and all bad if I bring it back into my life. So I have trouble using it as a symbol of grace, which is how this story is often interpreted, because that symbol so completely excludes me and others like me. What good is grace if I can't partake of it?

But that's the thing about symbols. They're risky. Any symbol you want to use, you can find someone for whom that symbol is offensive, and the message is lost. This text also has a wedding, which is often understood as a symbol of celebration, commitment, devotion, and love. Tell that to anyone who's been through a messy divorce, and see how much joy *they* get out of the wedding imagery. The kingdom of heaven is like a wedding banquet? I remember doing the seating chart at *my* wedding banquet, and I remember having to make sure that this person was seated nowhere

near this person, or else world war three would break out. And I had to do that with multiple people, and I only had a few tables to work with. I *hope* the kingdom of heaven's not going to be like that! Isaiah says that God will be like a husband (or spouse) to his people? I know of many people who the *last* thing they want is for the Lord God Almighty to treat them the way their (usually ex-) husbands or wives did. All of these texts are trying to proclaim something good, and that good message risks getting lost due to misunderstanding the symbols.

And maybe that's why Jesus was so reluctant to do it in the first place.

Initially he didn't want to. His mother pointed out the fact that they'd run out of wine, and Jesus basically told her it wasn't his problem, and his 'hour' had not yet come. In other words, he didn't plan to do anything about it. His mother persisted, though, and eventually he relented. Why was it so important to her?

First we need to look past the symbol, and understand the importance of the wine itself. In the ancient Middle East, drinkable water was scarce. It was often contaminated, and it made people sick. Wine, however, kept for a very long time, and when mixed with water, it served to kill some of the harmful bacteria. So the wine was usually heavily watered down, to enable people to be able to drink it as a thirst-quenching beverage in this arid climate. It wasn't a luxury; it was a necessity. Running out of wine at a wedding back then would be the same as running out of *all* beverages - including water - today. And in that culture, to do so would be hugely shameful for the host; the kind of shame that would reflect poorly on the family for years if not generations. What a way to begin your new life with your beloved, by bringing lasting shame on both families! Some have speculated that Mary may have been somehow related to the bridegroom (why else would she have had the authority to order the servants around?), and that she was trying to spare herself and her son Jesus from

sharing in that shame. Maybe, maybe not. Either way, she wasn't asking Jesus to help a bunch of drunks to keep drinking; she was asking him to spare the new couple and their families lifelong humiliation.

And Jesus did it. Abundantly. They not only were spared the shame of running out, but they were commended for the quality of the vintage. And what's most striking is that very few people knew that he did it. His mother knew, the servants who filled the jugs knew, and, presumably his disciples knew. But the groom, the bride, the chief steward, and all of the wedding guests never knew. They only knew that the wine seemed to get better as the celebration wore on, rather than the other way around. So this miracle, this sign by which Jesus' glory was revealed and this event that launched his ministry, was not only for something rather mundane, but it also went widely unnoticed.

And that's the way God often works in our lives. We like to look for the big miracles, the booming voice from the sky like in last week's gospel, or a few loaves of bread feeding thousands of people, or someone who was born blind suddenly being able to see. We look for God in the hospital, in the war zone, in the area devastated by natural disaster. Lots of people are looking for God anywhere that large numbers of people are suffering. And I promise you, God is in all those places, with all those people. But he is also in your home, in your kitchen, in your classroom at school, in your cubicle at work. He's with you in your car, as you pay your bills, as you do your laundry. The God who turned water into wine is also with the people struggling through detox, and the God who celebrated the joy of a wedding is also with families torn apart by divorce. A lot is made of the fact that nothing is too big for God, but this text reminds us that nothing is too small, either. John's gospel begins with a big, cosmic beginning: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things came into being through him.* How much bigger a miracle can you get than that—the creation of all things?!

It's big, important, impressive stuff. And then in the very next chapter, the Word is at a simple wedding, and performs a small miracle that most people don't even notice. But that's how God often works.

Jesus did that miracle reluctantly, but he did it. Maybe he was afraid it would be misunderstood by people like me; maybe he wanted a few more people to notice. His next action in John's gospel is to go to the Temple in Jerusalem and drive out the moneychangers in a very dramatic and very public scene; lots of people noticed that! But first he performed this small miracle that few noticed, but that had a lasting positive impact on the new couple and their families.

Using symbols like wine and weddings to talk about God is risky, but not nearly as risky as the risk God took with us. We might misunderstand, not notice or not care, about weddings and wine. But what about when we misunderstand, not notice or not care, about what Jesus' sacrifice on the cross really did for us? We have a God who cares so much for us that he sent his only Son to pay the price for our sins with his very life, who can feel what we feel, mourn as we mourn, struggle as we struggle, rejoice as we rejoice, and find us when we don't even know that we're lost. And so many of us misunderstand that grace, don't notice it or don't care. And still God holds to his covenant with us made in baptism, that we have been given new birth, adopted as heirs with Christ, set free from the power of sin and death and raised to new life. Every day.

What small miracles have you seen in your life? What gifts of grace have you received and maybe not noticed or really thought about until now? I invite you to look for God in the small, ordinary places in your lives, and I promise you, you'll be surprised by what you might find. Amen.