**“Ordinary to Extraordinary” 11-18-18 Sue Black**

It was a regular day. John was knee-deep in water, untangling and mending the fishing nets with his brother James as he did every workday, when Jesus, walking along the Sea of Galilee, invited them to leave their fishing boats to go with Him and become fishers of men. Scripture tells us, “*without delay Jesus called them and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the* *hired men and followed Him*.” Waking up that day I’m sure John had no idea his day would be anything but ordinary but in fact the next three years living and working with Jesus proved to be exceptionally extraordinary.

In the Gospel according to John chapter 2 we read of a journey that Jesus and his disciples took to Cana to attend a wedding. Wedding celebrations at that time were multi-day affairs with many out-of-town guests and much feasting. Toward the end of the festivities, Jesus’ mother Mary noticed that they had run out of wine, there was nothing left for the guests to drink. Mary asked Jesus to help the host out of this embarrassing situation and then instructed the servants to *“do whatever He tells you.”*

Reading from John 2:7-11 *“Jesus said to the servants, “Fill the jars with water”; so they filled them to the brim. Then He told them, “Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet.” They did so, and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside and said, “Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now.” What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which He revealed His glory; and His disciples believed in Him.”*

Ordinary water turned into wine. Not just a regular wine but a wine with character, the kind that comes from the healthiest vines, the ripest grapes fermented and stored to ensure the highest quality. Because of this wine, this surely was a wedding feast that was long remembered. But for those who knew the truth of the Winemaker, they were also witness to a miracle, to the power of God through His Son. And it all started with water.

Water is the basis for many ordinary things we do: bathing, cooking; even brushing our teeth. Water is also critical to life. A healthy person can go three weeks without food but only seven days without water. Water symbolizes cleansing or purifying in the sacrament of Baptism. Baptism is a holy time when the Spirit of Grace surrounds the church community like a warm blanket on a cold morning.

When we celebrate the baptism of a child it is a big day. Baptism is done in recognition that even before we are aware that God is at work in our lives, He is already present, moving, shaping and loving us. Baptism is a “*sign and seal of the covenant of grace.”* And it all starts with water, not sparkling, flavored or even distilled, just ordinary water. God takes the simple and honors it, He makes it extraordinary.

On the night He was betrayed, Jesus took the common cup and the bread of the table and shared it with His disciples, asking them to remember Him after He was gone. We use simple bread in the sacrament of Communion to symbolize the body of Christ given for us. Some churches use pita bread, some wafers or sourdough, whatever is familiar to the people of that time and place. For the Cup some use white or purple grape juice, others use wine. The simple elements of the Table that nourish our bodies are celebrated in the power of the Savior who nourishes our souls. It’s not about what we eat or drink, these are mere symbols of the generous mercies of Jesus.

Christ’s days on earth were busy ones as He preached of God’s great love as He traveled among the people. In John chapter 6 we read that many had heard of the signs that Jesus performed by healing the sick and a great crowd had gathered on the far shore of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus, knowing that many had come from a great distance, told the disciple Philip to feed the people. Not knowing what Jesus was about to do, the disciples wondered where they would get enough bread to feed everyone and where the money to pay for it would come from.

Reading from John 6:8-14*“Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, spoke up, “Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?” Jesus said, “Have the people sit down.” There was plenty of grass in that place, and they sat down (about five thousand men were there). Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish. When they had all had enough to eat, He said to his disciples, “Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted.” So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten. After the people saw the sign Jesus performed, they began to say, “Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world.”*

Perhaps some sought Jesus that day because they were curious, maybe others made the trip because their friends and family were going, some defiantly desired for their bodies to be healed, maybe others hoped for a free meal, but they came and they got more. Witness to the power of God they saw a miracle. His plenty fed the people with twelve baskets left over. Nothing went to waste. God uses everything and everyone who comes.

In the beginning – in Genesis chapters 1 and 2 we read of God’s carefully orchestrated Creation. Light and darkness, land and water and sky, plants and trees, the stars, our sun and moon and animals of every kind and God said *“it was good*.” *“Then God said, Let us make mankind in Our image, in Our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”(Genesis 1:26) “The Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being,”(Genesis 2:7)*

God formed Adam from dust and He continues to form each of us with intention and with purpose. The prophet Jeremiah wrote that God knew each of us and had plans for us long before He formed us in our mother’s wombs. God knew that we would be present today, in this place called Forest Park, worshiping Him on this Sunday before Thanksgiving. And *“God looked at everything He had made and said that is was very good.”*

During the Offering today we will bring our thankfulness forward. After the prayer please bring your family with your 2019 Commitment Card and Time and Talent and Interest Survey to the basket up front. God’s work in the world starts with the simple, it starts with each one of us.

Paul wrote in Ephesians that God, “*who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever!*

Let us pray.