

2nd SUNDAY of EPIPHANY

January 16, 2022

COLLECT: ALMIGHTY GOD, whose Son, our Savior Jesus Christ is the light of the world: Grant that your people, illumined by your Word and Sacrament, may shine with the radiance of Christ's glory, that he may be known, worshiped, and obeyed to the ends of the earth, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, now and forever. Amen.

THE LESSONS: First Reading: Isaiah 62:1-5

Psalm: 36:5-10

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:1-11

Gospel: John 2:1-11

THE SERMON: Have you ever been coerced to do something before you thought you were ready? Did you want to take a little more time to prepare, but the moment had arrived and required action? That is the position Jesus finds himself in as stated in today's Gospel.

Jesus is at a wedding in Cana. The scripture tells us it is the third day of Jesus' ministry. He is there, as a guest, with his mother and his disciples. Weddings were social events and could last three to four days or a week. The family of the groom supply the food and the drinks and they want it to be the very best they could afford.

At this wedding, the wine had now run out. Mary, the mother of Jesus stepped in to save the family from embarrassment. She approached Jesus and told him; "They have no wine left." Jesus looked at her and asked, "Woman, what concern is that to you and me?" Knowing what Mary was asking him to do, he said to her, "My hour has not yet come.?"

In this interchange, Mary remembering that the angel sent to her by God had told her she was to be the mother of God's son, the son was to be holy and that nothing was impossible for God. She remembered how the shepherds appeared at the stable on the night he was born and told her an angel of the Lord had told them of the child's birth. She also remembered that two years later, wise men had come to the house. They had been looking for the young Jesus. They were astrologers and had been following a star that had appeared in the sky the night the child was born. The star would lead them to the young child. Who they said fulfilled the prophesy of the Jewish prophets and that he was the Messiah written about in Jewish scripture. She also remembered they had called him the king of the Jews.

She had nurtured and watched Jesus grow up. She knew things about him that were not revealed to us through scripture. She knew that at the age of 12 she had found him in the presence of priests and scribes discussing with and asking them questions while the family searched for him.

They had gone to Jerusalem for the Passover celebration and when they were returning to their home in Nazareth, they discovered Jesus was missing. He was nowhere to be found in the group they had been traveling with. After a frantic search for three days, they had found him, still in Jerusalem, seated with priests and scribes discussing and asking questions about God. When she and Joseph asked him why he had caused them such anxiety, he said, "I must be about my father's business."

Knowing all this, Mary simply said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." And she went on to enjoy the party.

In saying to Mary, "My hour has not come. Jesus was saying, "I am not ready, I need more time." Mary though had put him in a situation where he had to act. She knew he could do it.

The scripture tells us that he saw six stone water jars used for the Jewish rite of purification. He told the servant to fill the six jars with water, each held about thirty gallons. Once the jars were filled, he told the servants to take some of the liquid in the jars to the chief steward. Once the chief steward tasted the liquid from the jars, he called the bridegroom and told him that, "Everyone at a wedding serves the good wine first, before the guests have gotten drunk, but he had saved the best wine for last."

This was Jesus' first miracle. He didn't think he was ready to start his ministry, but Mary did. She knew he could turn water into wine.

You have probably had some situations like this in your lives. You may have wondered if you were the right person for the job. You didn't think you knew enough or had the time to do something. However, someone or some force caused you to act and you discovered you were indeed ready and could do it.

I remember that I had wanted to be a preacher or priest but it would have to wait until I finished my military career, then I would go to seminary. However, God had other plans for me. First, he brought me to Las Vegas, Sin City, then one month after being here, he brought me to St. Matthew's.

He then put people like Father Michael Garrison, now bishop retired, Mary Allred, and Deacon Bonnie Polley in my life. They in turn got me actively involved in the Episcopal Church in Las Vegas and I learned about Total Ministry.

Not long after becoming so actively involved, one evening I got a call from the Bishop, Steward Zabriskie, He informed me that St, Matthew's wanted me to be one of its deacons. I was totally surprised and told Stuart I didn't know if I could be that good. I knew the lifestyle I was living and the fun I was having. I just thought it wasn't holy enough for me to be ordained.

Steward told me the people of St. Matthew's wanted me and they thought the life I was living was just fine. So, here I am today, 29 years later, a priest serving the parishes of St, Matthew's/San Mateo and Holy Spirit. I really didn't think the time was right or that I could do this.

I didn't have to wait until my military career was over to go to seminary. Instead, God placed me in Sin City and enrolled me in Total Ministry. I'll admit, I had to make a few adjustments in my lifestyle but it has all been worth it.

Tomorrow, all over the United States we will be celebrating Martin Luther King Jr. Day. There will be parades, television programs and a general sharing of the life and times of Dr. King.

He too thought he wasn't the right person for the situation he found himself in. He was a young minister who had just come to Montgomery, Alabama to pastor the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church. He was well educated; he had a Doctorate in Religion and his father was the pastor of the larger Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia. Dr. King was new to Montgomery and was trying to get his feet on the ground when Rosa Parks, an African American female refused to get up and give her seat to a white man on a Montgomery bus. On December 5, 1955 she was arrested, removed from the bus and jailed.

The local ministerial association and the NAAACP decided to do something about it. They bailed Mrs. Parks out of jail, formed the Montgomery Improvement Association (MAI) and asked African Americans to stop riding the buses in Montgomery. Later the MAI would lead to the formation of the Southern Christian Leader Conference (SCLC)

They needed someone to be the spokesperson and negotiate with the city leadership of Montgomery. Well Dr. King was chosen, he was well educated, a good talker, new to the community and, of the African American pastors in Montgomery, had the least to lose.

After the success of a one-day bus boycott, On December 5, 1955, the Montgomery Improvement Association was formed and the Civil Rights Movement was robustly began.

Dr. King didn't think he should have been the leader, he had his doubts. He was a new preacher with a young family and he was not well known in Montgomery. The situation forced him to the forefront of our history.

We must remember that God is in charge of all. Even if you don't think you are the right one for the moment, for the situation, or the one to be involved God will decide it. If you feel you are unworthy, God will fix it. He will mold you and give you all the tools or weapons you will need.

We don't decide when **it's go time**, God decides. He also will not leave you alone, he'll be there guiding you along the way. Amen.

Rev. Lionel Starkes