

SA, SL, TS and DSM United Churches

Fourth Sunday after Epiphany – February 9th, 2025

Prelude: – by Christie Coatsworth

Welcome & Announcements:

Thank you for your support of all our past services, which are posted on our websites - Southbuxton.ca and Talbotstreet.ca

Call to Worship:

Eric: God's faithfulness is as high as the clouds. God's love stretches everywhere.

Sung Response: *"For the Beauty of the Earth"*

People: God's righteousness is as tall as the biggest mountains. God's love stretches everywhere.

Sung Response: *"For the beauty of the skies"*

Eric: God's justice is as deep as the ocean. God's love stretches everywhere.

Sung Response: *"For the love which from our birth"*

People: God's love is big enough for everyone. God's love stretches everywhere.

Sung Response: *"Over and around us lies"*

Eric: Come, let us worship the God whose gifts flow abundantly.

Sung Response: *"God of all, to you we raise, this our hymn of grateful praise".*

Opening Hymn: VU 226 "For the Beauty of the Earth" (Video)

For the beauty of the earth,
for the beauty of the skies,
for the love which from our birth
over and around us lies,
 God of all, to you we raise
 this our hymn of grateful praise.

For the beauty of each hour
of the day and of the night,
hill and vale, and tree and flower,
sun and moon, and stars of light,
 God of all, to you we raise
 this our hymn of grateful praise.

For the joy of human love,
brother, sister, parent, child,
friends on earth, and friends above,
for all gentle thoughts and mild,
 God of all, to you we raise
 this our hymn of grateful praise.

For each perfect gift sublime

to our race so freely given,
graces human and divine,
flowers of earth and buds of heaven,
God of all, to you we raise
this our hymn of grateful praise.

Opening Prayer:

People: God of many gifts, you offer us so many things: food and drink, everlasting life, gifts for ministry, shelter from danger. Above all: overflowing love! In this time of worship, open us to your Spirit, that we might experience and celebrate the many gifts you give us. Amen.

Responsive Psalm: Psalm 36: 5 – 10

Your love is faithful, Lord, and even the clouds in the sky can depend on you.

Your decisions are always fair.

They are firm like mountains, deep like the sea, and all people and animals are under your care.

Your love is a treasure, and everyone finds shelter in the shadow of your wings.

You give your guests a feast in your house, and you serve a tasty drink that flows like a river.

The life-giving fountain belongs to you, and your light gives light to each of us.

Our Lord, keep showing love to everyone who knows you, and use your power to save all whose thoughts please you.

Children's Story:

Children's Hymn: "I Have a Friend Who Loves Me"

I have a friend who loves me,
who loves me, who loves me.
I have a friend who loves me
and Jesus is his name.

I have a friend who helps me,
who helps me, who helps me.
I have a friend who helps me
and Jesus is his name.

Gospel: John 2: 1 - 11 - Jesus at a Wedding in Cana

Three days later Mary, the mother of Jesus, was at a wedding feast in the village of Cana in Galilee. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited and were there. When the wine was all gone, Mary said to Jesus, "They don't have any more wine." Jesus replied, "Mother, my time hasn't yet come! You must not tell me what to do." Mary then said to the servants, "Do whatever Jesus tells you to do." At the feast there were six stone water jars that were used by the people for washing themselves in the way that their religion said they must. Each jar held about 100 liters. Jesus told the servants to fill them to the top with water. Then after the jars had been filled, he said, "Now take some water and give it to the man in charge of the feast." The servants did as Jesus told them, and the man in charge drank some of the water that had now turned into wine. He did not know where the wine had come from, but the servants did. He called the bridegroom over and said, "The best wine is always served first. Then after the guests have had plenty, the other wine is served. But you have

kept the best until last!" This was Jesus' first miracle, and he did it in the village of Cana in Galilee. There Jesus showed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.

Message: "Abundant Love"

We can depend on God's abundant love. Whether we are going through a time of no hope, or in the best of times when we are celebrating at a wedding. God gives us extravagant gifts, even miracles. For many of us in North America in the 21st century, we see these gifts and miracles so often that we take them for granted. The power of God's Holy Spirit works in the midst of our community each and every day. We in faith, offer God's gifts of love and compassion to all of God's beloved people.

John shares Jesus' first miracle of turning water into wine at a wedding in Cana. This miracle story is only found in John's gospel. This is the story where Jesus' ministry becomes public at a wedding in Cana of Galilee. The disciples are there, as is Jesus' mother, Mary, who seems to already know and trust in the works of Jesus.

As the story unfolds, it seems like many other wedding stories. It seems to be a normal wedding, where everyone enjoys the food and drink. Then suddenly, "the wine gave out," which is an embarrassing predicament for the hosts. Mary calls on Jesus to help. Mary in faith trusts in Jesus' ability to respond to this need. Even if Jesus is not so inclined to do as Mary is asking, Mary continues to act as if Jesus is on board with this task. Even when Jesus asks, "What does this have to do with me", Mary demonstrates her trust when she tells the servants: "Do whatever he tells you."

The Catholic tradition holds Mary up as a woman of extreme faith and Mother Mary is one of the most revered Catholic Saints. We see Mary's faith and trust in this story, as she "knows" what Jesus can and will do.

There is the saying, "If you are going to do something - do it right". Jesus offers the wedding party somewhere around 150 gallons of the highest quality wine at the end of the feast. Not only does Jesus provide the best wine, but providing the best wine at the end of the feast, is definitely a reversal of expectations. Even the wine steward cannot explain the origin of the wine, although the servants who had drawn the water know.

Expectations are that you serve the best quality wine first and as the party goes on - you serve the lesser quality wine towards the end as people are unlikely to remember. But that is not how Jesus turns water into wine. Jesus gives it all – the best wine and lots of it. This miracle of turning of the water into wine - reveals who Jesus is. This miracle speaks of God's extravagance and abundance into everyday

activities. God's glory is revealed and the disciples have seen it for themselves and they too believe in Jesus. Jesus turns the wedding party, and its expectations – upside down.

As God's people, we Christians live with an abundant spirit that stands in contrast to many of the world's realities. We imagine hope where there seems to be none. We allow ourselves to be guided by faith in God's unending love. We offer our offerings and gifts to help bring God's abundant love to our communities. We believe in the Holy Spirit working among us as we minister to others. We are the very example of God's abundance.

As we follow Jesus as his disciples, Jesus shows that there is more than enough. We are human and our default is to live in the attitude of scarcity rather than abundance. You know what we are talking about - there's not enough time, resources, food, jobs, affordable housing, etc.) But with Jesus as our model and the Holy Spirit working with us we go to work and like Jesus we give the best in our ministries, not just the leftovers.

Even the questions we ask ourselves when we as the church are looking at local missions can send us in one direction or the other. What do you think of when we ask, "What's missing in our community"? Versus asking, "What's possible in our community"? Each question leads you down a different frame of mind. We live in the abundance of God's love. We live in the power of the Holy Spirit. We trust in our faith and our relationship with God. We reach out in hope with, "What's possible?" We can work with God and the Holy Spirit to bring abundant ways of thinking to our homes, our churches, our workplaces, our schools, our parks, and our streets. We can use our gifts to transform our community and the world. We are not alone. God is always with us. Thanks be to God.

Reflection Hymn: VU 331 "The Church's One Foundation"

- 1 The church's one foundation is Jesus Christ our Lord;
we are his new creation by water and the Word;
from heaven he came and sought us that we might ever be
his living servant people, by his own death set free.
- 2 Called forth from every nation, yet one o'er all the earth;
one charter of salvation: one Lord, one faith, one birth.
One holy name professing and at one table fed,
to one hope always pressing, by Christ's own Spirit led.
- 3 Though with a scornful wonder the world sees us oppressed,
by schisms rent asunder, by heresies distressed,
yet saints their watch are keeping; their cry goes up, 'How long?'

But soon the night of weeping shall be the morn of song.

- 4 Mid toil and tribulation, and tumult of our war,
we wait the consummation of peace forevermore;
till with the vision glorious our longing eyes are blest,
and the great church victorious shall be the church at rest.
- 5 We now on earth have union with God the Three in One,
and share through faith communion with those whose rest is won.
Oh, happy ones, and holy! Lord, give us grace that we
like them, the meek and lowly, on high may dwell with thee.

Invitation to Share Our Gifts:

Eric: We live in the wonderful reality of God's promise, as we reflect on God's abundant love for all of creation. In the name of Jesus Christ, we offer our gifts to be blessed, and shared with those in need.

Offertory: VU 541 "Praise God From Whom..."

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above ye heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

Offertory Prayer:

People: Loving God, whose gifts are overflowing: as you have poured out love upon your people, so we seek to give back to you even a little of all you have given to us. Take and use the gifts you have entrusted to us, and which we now offer back to you, that we in turn might overflow with love for your world. Amen.

Hymn: VU 400 "Listen To Your Children Praying"

Lord, listen to your children praying,
Lord, send your Spirit in this place;
Lord, listen to your children praying,
send us love, send us power, send us grace!

Pastoral Prayer & Lord's Prayer:

Closing Hymn: "Come, O Fount of Every Blessing"

Come, O Fount of every blessing,
tune my heart to sing your grace;
streams of mercy, never ceasing
call for songs of endless praise.
Teach me some melodious sonnet,
sung by flaming tongues above.
Praise the mount; I'm fixed upon it,

mount of God's unfailing love.

Here I pause in my sojourning,
giving thanks for having come,
come to trust, at every turning,
God will guide me safely home.
Jesus sought me when a stranger,
wandering from the fold of God,
came to rescue me from danger,
precious presence, precious blood.

O, to grace how great a debt
or daily I am drawn anew!
Let that grace now, like a fetter,
bind my wandering heart to you.
Prone to wander, I can feel it,
wander from the love I've known:
here's my heart, O, take and seal it,
seal it for your very own.

Blessing:

Eric: God has blessed us; with an abundance of life, with an abundance of hope, with an abundance of truth. God's abundant gifts are more than enough for all of creation, now and forever more.

Chorus: VU 226 Refrain

Refrain: God of all, to you we raise
this our hymn of grateful praise.

Amen, Amen, Amen.

Postlude: – Christie Coatsworth