

From Bleak to Fulfilled

Isaiah 62:1-57; John 2:1-11

Well, a couple of things are different this week. First of all, I'm up here. I don't think that's happened before. Secondly, I have notes! (So Vicky, you don't need to worry about, you know, transcribing it all when it's done. 😊) I have notes because I want to credit a colleague who is a minister in Whitehorse, whose name is Bev Brazier, who this week sent out a Facebook thing and said, "If anyone wants a narrative for the wedding at Cana, I have a couple." And I said, "Yes please." And they arrived, I mean almost immediately. She inspired me to look differently at this story as sometimes happens when we get the words of a colleague and are pushed outside of our own, oh, colouring outside the lines, I believe it's called. Some of this is me and some of this is her:

Mothers of the bride. Kind of the stuff of legends, aren't they? Robert Fulghum wrote an entire story about a mother of the bride. In one of his books, he called her the Mob. I've encountered a few Mobs in my ministry. The mother of this bride, well...just look at her. She's got a story, you can tell. I know you're here at this wedding, but you don't really know the family, do you? Well, let's just take a moment while we wait for the musicians and the food to get a little bit of a backstory on the family. It's important to try to get to know the mother of the bride because I really think you'll like her. She might even remind you of someone you know. She's not all that different from the folk from your home.

Honestly, I have to say that if you'd known her before today, you probably wouldn't believe the change in her for this day. It's truly a transformation, really. She's not the same woman – it's like water turned into wine, or a resurrection. Let me take you back a bit: she was...I don't want to be harsh. But remember, she's been attempting to live up to all of what are the expectations of the good wife. You've read all the expectations of the good wife, who gets up before dawn and does it all. Well, she's been trying to live up to all those expectations. So her hands are cracked and worn and most of the time her face looks lined with worry and she's become, well, crusty.

She's turned into one of those people that...well, she's kind of cynical. She's one of those glass-half-empty kind of folk who never go to a party and they don't like weddings, and if she had to go to one, she'd probably sit in reception in a corner and drink. She'd watch the crowd through narrowed eyes. Then she'd say, "I wonder how long this marriage is going to last. I've seen them all. I don't give it two years." You know her, don't you? Yeah, I can see you do.

I'm telling you, it's like a miracle. You saw her just now – that's her, at her daughter's wedding. She's dressed to the nines. She went and got the most spectacular silk and had it made into the most amazing gown. Her face has been cleared up. She's actually smiling. As she watched those two young people promise forever, you could see the hope, the joy light up her face and her eyes. And for one spectacular moment, you could tell, she believes in love. She actually, truly believes in love. Beneath all of that crusty exterior, there is still a spot in her, a spark that believes. It has taken the wedding of her daughter

to break her open like you would break open a stone water jar and let the juice of life flow in her again. So I watch her here at her daughter's wedding: all that love and all the hope and all the dreams. They are revealed in her face in a kind of glow. The kind of glow that may not have been there since the day her daughter was born. But it's there now.

I wonder, is that how the Creator feels about us? When, for instance, we gather at the table. You know the table: the Communion Table. The table that we had anticipated we might gather at today, and then said, "No we do communion in some imaginary virtual way as we have done so much in the last year and a half." But when we do gather, does God sit in the front row with that look on God's face of hope and anticipation and joy and possibility of love? Of love. Wanting that fullness of life for us so much that it hurts. It's strange, how we are, we humans: the world is so achingly beautiful but so unbearably tragic at the same time. There are people around the world suffering. We heard on the news this morning about the refugees in Afghanistan landing and trying to find their way in a new and unfamiliar world but leaving a place where the oppression was just overwhelming.

So, people come, always hoping for better. It isn't always going to be this way. The best is yet to come. I come from Saskatchewan; its next year country, you know that, right? Next year the crops are going to be great. Next year the Riders will win. Next year, we'll be the curling champions of the world. Next year. Next year, farmers are going to be wealthy. You'd think we were Jewish in Saskatchewan: next year in Jerusalem.

And so, the best is yet to come, love is real, and real life and real justice are possible. This is not the best of all possible worlds, because we are still constructing it. Of all the things that Jesus' presence among us does, it offers hope. And of all the things that turning water into wine does, it offers hope. Somewhere inside even the most jaded of us, we long for that moment. We reach for it even when our brains won't let us name it for fear of the pain that we'll experience in its absence. But our bodies enact hope, our hearts remember, our dreams know the truth: love is possible, and the best is yet to come.

And so in the lamplight at weddings, we remember and we enact our deepest dreams. And in the daylight, in communion, or in the dusk of an evening around the dinner table. In the sunshine of a morning as we meet in coffee shops when we dare. Whenever we gather in an act that resembles communion – which, by the way, is an act of simple eating and drinking. And our bodies act out what our brains have forgotten. And ritual once again speaks for us.

We say a loud NO to those who claim that change is not possible. We say a loud NO to those who believe that peace is not possible. We say a loud NO to those who believe that justice and right relationship can never happen. Because every time we sit at a table and share a meal, we declare that, in fact, all of those things are possible. I have to say that as someone who is regularly in a position to watch people's faces at both weddings and at communion, watching as you witness two people promise to love one another. Or watching as you reach out for the bread and the cup. I have to say that in those moments, whole worlds of vulnerability and hope and pain are revealed plain and naked on the face. It's beautiful to behold, because in those moments, I am privileged to see that you, in fact, do believe in love. You really do. A new world is awaiting us. It starts right here; it starts right now; it starts in this place; it starts as we share this virtual communion with one another; it starts as we share in this feast of love. Thanks be to God. Amen.