

Rev. Timothy M. Crummitt

Second Sunday after Epiphany - Year C

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

Isaiah 62:1-5

Psalm 36:5-10

I Corinthians 12:1-11

John 2:1-11

Gospel

The Holy Gospel according to St. John:

1On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. 2Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. 3When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." 4And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come." 5His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." 6Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. 7Jesus said to them, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. 8He said to them, "Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward." So they took it. 9When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom 10and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now." 11Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

The Gospel of our Lord.

Prayer

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen

2 1/2 Years

Good morning! Starting this afternoon we will be having our annual congregational leadership retreat in Williamsburg. This will be my third such retreat, and January 1st marked two and half years for me as the Called pastor here at St. Paul's Lutheran Church. For those of you who don't know, this is my first call. I was "fresh" from Seminary when I began here in Hampton. The conditions for the first call of a pastor are that they are required to serve for at least three years before they can move on to another call. So... that three year mark is coming up... and I think a few people over the last couple months have known that, because in that time I have gotten several questions fishing for answers as to how long I was planning on staying. I even had coffee with the dean of this conference, Pastor Joel Neubauer of St. Mark, who also asked what my plans were. Now, my first thought was that these people have been counting down the days till they can run me out the door, but I soon realized that this wasn't the case at all. For some unknown reason, some of you actually seem to like me.

As I thought about that I was also in the process of working with the Rev. John Wertz, who you may remember was here in August, to put together the leadership retreat that will be starting today. It had me thinking of all kinds of different things, what I had learned over the course of my time here, what we had accomplished, where I had failed and where we had grown together. The question at the forefront of my brain was this: What's next?

While I doubt that I could answer that question completely, I can say this: I'm not going anywhere! You're stuck with me for at least a few more years. I was, and remain, excited for what the Holy Spirit is doing here at St. Paul's! Think of all the things that have happened in these two and a half years: We have provided literally THOUSANDS of meals through the support of things like the HELP Food Pantry, Machen Mobile Food Pantry, and the Langley Village lunch program. We've hosted A Night's Welcome as well as working together to help another church with feeding those who come to A Night's Welcome. We've collected school supplies for Lutheran Family Services of Virginia as well as given dozens of children the joy of presents on Christmas. We've had almost a dozen baptisms and sung in joy for the people who have become a part of this family. We've also mourned together, holding hands in our grief and supporting those who wait for the final resurrection. In what can only be record time, St. Paul's raised over \$6,000 to send three people to the ELCA Youth Gathering in Houston, Texas! We also helped build a house! Together with Gloria Dei, Thrivent, and Habitat for Humanity we worked in Williamsburg to give a family the gift of safe housing. We've elected a new Bishop, we've sent members from this congregation to the many different synodical events like Power in the Spirit, ACTS, and Synod Assembly. It hasn't all been social ministry either, we have also grown together with the many different bible studies and Sunday school offerings. On the seventh day God rested, and we have enjoyed our sabbath time together with laughter and joy wherever two or three of us have been gathered. There is no other group who deserves our thanks as that of the prayer team, who meet every week to create a prayer sheet that is distributed to members and PRAYED EVERY DAY of the week! I have never seen anything like it, and St. Paul's remains strong because of the work of those committed individuals. Finally, every time we

walk out of those doors we spread the Good News of Jesus Christ with every person we meet. God is certainly active here at St. Paul's.

Why mention all this? It isn't to brag about what we have done but to show you that St. Paul's is strong and vibrant. If I am honest, St. Paul's seemed like it had something to prove when I first got here. There was some sort of emotional damage, and surrounded by a culture of mega churches, in a time where we are being told that the church is "shrinking" (I think it's changing by the way, not shrinking), in that culture of scarcity on some basic, maybe subliminal, level this congregation began to believe all those lies they had been told.

For the most part, you have given up those delusions, and ministry has flourished here. Which leads us to my earlier question: What's next? The second reading today lists the variety of different spiritual gifts, and I'll be honest, we will need all of those if we're going to continue in God's good work. We need everyone, and everyone has something or some way to serve.

Over the last few months something has begun to come into focus for me. I don't think I'm the greatest pastor in the world but I do believe that my gifts helped serve St. Paul's in what it needed when I got here. Those gifts are forming community and building something new. But, and here is where I'm honest with myself and with you, those aren't necessarily the gifts that St. Paul's needs now. I COULD leave, go somewhere else where I could put my abilities to use again, but it would feel like quitting to me. St. Paul's is growing and changing and if I want to become a better pastor, it will require me to work in areas where I'm uncomfortable and inexperienced.

That's the great thing about the Gospel reading today; so many had thought that Israel's greatest days were over. The good wine of the celebration was already used up, what did they

have now? But then Jesus shows up, showing them and us that God ALWAYS has something bigger and better planned for us, if we only have the faith to take the step forward and see... So, who's coming with me? Amen.