

# Scripture Readings and Sermon

*January 20, 2019 by Rev. Mark Brechin*

## **Commentary on Isaiah 62:1-5** (*Youtube [Lectionary Study Video](#)*)

Mount Zion was the location of the Jebusite fortress that David captured and renamed the City of David. As Jerusalem grew to include not only Mount Zion but also Mount Moriah (Temple Mount), Zion began to be used to refer to the land around Jerusalem. It is this land of Zion and city of Jerusalem which God will rename. Just as God renamed Abram to Abraham, Sarai to Sarah, and Jacob to Israel, the renaming of Zion and Jerusalem marks a new beginning. The time of judgment and exile has ended and a new age has begun. Jerusalem will be called Hepzibah (My Delight Is in Her) and Zion shall be Beulah (Married). In a number of popular hymns, Beulah land is synonymous with heaven.

## **Commentary on I Corinthians 12:1-11** (*Youtube [Lectionary Study Video](#)*)

Last week, we read in Acts that the new believers were baptized in the Holy Spirit. In Matthew, Jesus reminds his followers that the tree will be known by the fruit it produces. For the Corinthians, the fruit must be some manifestation of the Holy Spirit into which they were baptized. Rather than celebrating these gifts, however, the Corinthians were using them to determine who among them were more gifted. Paul reminded them that everyone who proclaims "Jesus is Lord" has received the Holy Spirit. The gifts of the Holy Spirit do not indicate a special holiness of an individual but are given for the benefit of the whole body. The gifts are meant to work together for the glory of God.

## **Commentary on John 2:1-11** (*Youtube [Lectionary Study Video](#)*)

The lectionary Gospel reading takes the listener from the Jordan, near the Dead Sea, north to Cana of Galilee which is just past Nazareth. Jesus has been invited to a wedding most likely because of his mother's relatives. Cana is only six miles from Nazareth. This would explain Mary's concern over there not being enough wine. It would also explain why the servants obeyed Mary. While on the surface this appears to be a simple story of a wedding "disaster", the Gospel indicates that this was the first of his signs. For the writer of John, the entire gospel must be read through the lens of the last supper. When Jesus is baptized, John the Baptist says behold the Lamb of God. Mary asks Jesus to make wine (symbolic of his blood) and he responds that it is not yet time. Jesus, who will cleanse us of our sins by his blood, tells them to fill the water jars used for rites of purification. This is why the wine is so good, it is the best that Jesus has to offer - his life. In fact, the entire last supper can be interpreted as a wedding contract where the bride price is paid (bread), the intended bride accepts (wine), and the groom goes to prepare a place (resurrection).

## **Sermon Summary** (*Youtube [Sermon Video](#)*)

The story of the wedding at Cana is, for the Gospel of John, a foretaste of the Last Supper. Literary allusions like "on the third day" and "it is not yet my time" point to the story of Holy Week. In this context, the focus shifts from the miracle of turning water into wine to the symbolism of water meant for purification becoming the wine and blood of Christ that purifies us all. We are washed in the blood and our robes have been made whiter than snow. Why? Because we are the Bride of Christ. And so by beginning his Gospel with the story of Cana, John points not only to the redemptive story of Holy Week but the conclusion of the story when one day Christ will come back for His bride. This is the story which is referenced by Isaiah when the land shall be called "Beulah" or married and Jerusalem shall be "His delight".

Until that final day when the wedding is complete, we have been given gifts by the bridegroom.

Jesus has sent us the Holy Spirit and given us a variety of gifts from the same Spirit. The gifts of the Spirit is as if Jesus gave every Christian a piece of a much larger puzzle. It is only when we share our gifts with others that we begin to see the whole picture. There are a number of reasons that people don't share their gift. The first is simply that they are unaware of the gift God has given them. Words such as discernment and prophecy are not commonly used or understood in today's society. Another reason gifts are not shared is that we simply do not make the time. The more we use the gifts the Holy Spirit has given us, the more aware we become of where those gifts are needed.

And finally, gifts are not shared because our society has become a society of spectators. People often approach church as another source of entertainment. We grade the worship service on the quality of music, the delivery of the sermon, or even the temperature of the building and comfort of the seating. When did worship become less about praising God and more about how it makes us feel? In a performance culture, people are embarrassed to share their gifts for fear of judgment. We let the "experts" talk or the "truly talented" sing. But when we hold back our gifts, we deny the experience that Jesus has planned when all the gifts come together for God's glory. We fail to be the church we could be because we fail to share the gifts we have been given. Let us once again hear the words of Mary to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you!" When we respond, we just might find the ordinary can become quite extraordinary.