

## **“God is with You in the Ordinary”**

### **John 2:1-11**

What was the last request you made to God? Was it for something big like surviving cancer? Something small like patience with a high maintenance 16-year-old daughter? Have you ever caught yourself apologizing to God for your requests?

- “I know you might not care about this, but . . .”
- “I know this really doesn’t matter in the grand scheme of things, but . . .”
- “I know this seems like such silly request, but . . .”

Why do we do this? Why are we so hesitant to pray for the “small things” in life?

Maybe it has to do with how we view God. We see him as holy and distant. Someone far off and far above everything happening on earth. We don’t view him as near and present, involved in our everyday lives, or moving through the world in an intimate way.

John opens his Gospel with the statement, “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.” John tells us the Word is Jesus, “The only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth”, and that he “became flesh and made his dwelling among us”. Jesus was God-in-the-flesh. Once Jesus ascended into heaven, he left us with his Spirit – a guide who, like the air around you, is everywhere, and like the breath in your lungs, is inside you.

So, if God is as near as your own breath, surely, he is aware of what is happening in your life, in your mind, in your heart and body. He is with you in the highest of highs and deepest of lows.

He is with you just as much during a trip to Giant Eagle as he is when you're heading to the Clinic for tests because your body is whacking out again. He is in the ordinary moments of life.

Jesus' first miracle happened as a result of an ordinary problem in an ordinary setting and involved ordinary materials. Jesus didn't heal anyone, or miraculously feed thousands, or even offer any parables or other teaching. Yet John recorded the story just as he did all the others – which means this story can tell us something important about who Jesus was and what that means for our lives today.

So today, find comfort in this Jesus who was divine yet altogether ordinary. This man who woke up each day, worked, fished, drank water and at one wedding turned it into wine.

Mother Mary knew Jesus was ordinary in that she had given birth to him. On the other hand, her son was extraordinary in what he could accomplish.

John 2:4-5 – “When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, ‘they have no wine’. And Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, what concern is that to you and to me’? My hour has not yet come’. His mother said to the servants, ‘Do whatever he tells you’”.

What a mom! At this point, Mary has no clue that her request for more wine is pretty ordinary compared to Jesus' miracles after this. But maybe this is actually the point: The ordinariness of it all. God wants us to come to him with our requests in everything – not just the big things in life.

Mary didn't worry that the size of her request was too small. She simply connected the problem with the provider. She simply said to Jesus, “They have no wine”.

Jesus was annoyed by his mother. “Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come”. Sounds like a “no” to me. He didn’t need his mom telling him what to do as an adult. I know the feeling. Plus, Jesus didn’t want all the attention.

Mary doesn’t get mad, she gets manipulative. She ignores what he said and tells the servants, “Do whatever he tells you”. Mary knew her son well enough to know he would do it if she ignored his “no” and she acted like he would do it.

The servants follow Jesus’ instructions and there is more than enough really good wine to finish the wedding celebration.

Verse 11 – “Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him”.

What causes you to believe in Jesus? How have events, persons, or moments convinced you to believe in Christ? What big or little miracles in your life have strengthened your faith?

I share with you two ordinary Divinity miracles, as we are often blessed with miracles in our community of faith that strengthen our faith. The first was written by Loretta Cross a few years back to describe the miracle of decorating our church for Christmas.

“Lynn Fix is a part of our Divinity ministry that every Christmas for the past 50 years has brought our world a little closer to heaven and Lynn has given us an example of how we are supposed to act in the world.

In 1968, 50 years ago, Pastor Boehm asked Lynn Fix and Mary Ellen Murray who back then sang in our choir, to decorate the sanctuary for Christmas. They recruited other choir members, especially men, to help them. Wreaths, garlands, and lights needed to be hung.

Lynn was 36 years old when she started and told me she thought she was going to have a heart attack every time Harry Herman, Glen Sellers, or Paul Klemme would climb the step ladders to hang the decorations. She was terrified one of them would fall.

In those years we had five trees that all needed to be strung with lights and decorated. We have now downsized to 3 pre-lit trees

Lynn has 2 favorite memories. The first year all the garlands went up along with all the wreaths and the lights were turned on. She said, "It was so beautiful." Then about 18 years ago, John Smeets invented and installed a pulley system that eliminated the need for step ladders for the most part. "Thank goodness for him."

Over the past 50 years all the decorations have been slowly replaced including replacing the bows with wire ribbons. There are now 12 wreaths in the sanctuary, 4 wreaths in the parlor, 2 wreaths in the narthex, 4 wreaths in the hallways, and 2 wreaths in the entries for a total of 24 wreaths hung every year during the week before the first Sunday in Advent and taken down before the first Sunday in Epiphany.

Lynn's sister, Elaine Schuster, was her assistant decorator for the first 10 years of this century until she passed on. Eric Schumacher has been in training for the last 8 years and is in charge for the first time this year. Lynn has prepared him well.

Lynn shared with me a note she received from Pastor Don in 1981 . . . Dear Lynn and Mary Ellen and all your Christmas elves'!

In the Lord's name I want to thank you for the lovely church decorations. It again looks so special . . . heavenly! We are appreciative of all your time and skills!

God fill your Christmas with beauty and joy and the New Year with blessings. Gratefully

– Pastor Don.

When we get on this ride that bridges heaven and earth, we thank Lynn and all her helpers over the past 50 years for helping to move our world a little closer to heaven every Christmas season.”

Today is Lynn’s 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. We join with her family in the narthex to celebrate the miracle she’s experienced in her life.

Today we also celebrate the miracle of commissioning 6 new Stephen Ministers: Lori Schifano, Ed and Pat Murray, Delila Rodgers, Sue Marko, and Linda Howe.

For the past 17 years our new Stephen Ministers complete 52 hours of training once a week from September through February. They commit themselves to entering into a one-on-one caregiving relationship – male to male and female to female – with one of our Divinity members in need of a good listener who can bring Holy Communion if they’re homebound or in a nursing home. They will learn who their care receivers are this morning. The one elderly widower I went to visit responded with these words when I asked him if he would like a Stephen Minister: “Pastor Doug, I would love to have a Stephen Minister.”

One such relationship began 5 years ago when Lyn Ziebro became Joan Dreh’s Stephen Minister. Lyn made many house visits when Joan was living by herself. There were many check-in telephone calls.

Six months before her death, Joan had to move into a nursing home that she hated. Lyn continued to visit when the nursing home allowed it and they continued what became 1-or 2-hour phone conversations.

She told Lyn and her 3 sons that she decided not to get vaccinated despite the protests of her sons and the nursing home. She was ready to go home and be with Dougie, her husband.

Joan wanted to die. She contracted Covid on a Monday and died on Friday. Our 8<sup>th</sup> Divinity member to die from Covid in a nursing home. Since then, 2 more have died in nursing homes. We give thanks for our Stephen Ministers that help prepare our Divinity family to make that journey home. And we give thanks for our Lord, Jesus Christ who turns water into wine and death into eternal life.

May the peace of God . . .

#574 – Here I Am Lord