

John 2: 1-11; Wedding at Cana, invitation to Communion

Mothers of the bride. They're the stuff of legend, aren't they?

And the mother of *this* bride – well, just look at her. You can tell she has a story can't you? Just look.

I know you're here at the wedding but you don't really know the family, do you? So let me fill you in a bit while we're waiting for the musicians and the food.

You should try to get to know her – you'll like her I think. She's very like people from home. But honestly –I have to say that if you had known her before today – you wouldn't believe the change in her. It's a – a transformation! Almost like....she's not the same woman. Like water turned to wine, like – a resurrection.

Well let me take you back a bit. She was....I don't want to be harsh here, not judgmental or anything, but she was a hard woman. Life had made her that way I guess....a cynical, "glass-half-empty" kind of person, you know? Never someone who'd go to a party, didn't like weddings, and if she *had* to go to one, she'd sit there at the reception, drink too much, narrow her eyes, as if closing out some....something....and light up a cigarette. Then, breathing out the fumes through her nostrils you know how seasoned smokers do that? Narrow her eyes against the smoke and say "Humph! I wonder how long *this* will last?" You know her, don't you? Or women like her? Yes I can see you do.

Anyway, I'm telling you – it's like a miracle. You saw her just now, now that it's her own daughter's wedding – a different woman altogether. Her face, at that ceremony – her face was clear, - pink and glowing as she watched those two young people promise forever. And she joined in the prayers with a fierce kind of hope in her eyes....she wants *so much* for her daughter to be happy – it almost hurts to see it so naked, there in her face. It would break your heart. Her face is soft, open....It's like someone come back from the dead.

And after the ceremony – just now, as the music started up – she danced! Did you see? Danced with a fluid grace I'd never seen in her. Ever. In spite of everything life has dealt her, and beneath that stony exterior that had hardened over her pain, *she believes in love*. It took the wedding of her daughter to break her open like stone water jars, and let the juice of life flow in her again. The depths of her – the best of her – saved for the last. She believes in love after all.

It was so powerful a moment, watching her transformation, that when the water jars brought forth wine it seemed like just an extension of the miracle of this wedding...it seemed like *anything* was possible, and that the wine both fueled and reflected the miracles happening among us.

I watch her there, at her daughter's wedding....all the love and hopes and dreams for her so clearly there in her face, revealed in her body whether or not she knows we can see it....and I wonder – is that how our Creator feels about us? When we – for instance – when we gather at this table; when we reach for the bread and the wine and we promise

one another the peace of Christ....does God sit in the front row with that look; hoping and wanting and aching for us to mean it and for it to be real? Wanting the fullness of life for us so much that it hurts...God's very body broken apart with the desire for our happiness? Is that what it's like for God when we gather here?

Isn't it strange, how we are, we humans? This world is so achingly beautiful but also...so unbearably tragic. How many people in Haiti are suffering unspeakably right now? And those are just the ones we know about. And how the earth is suffering – how the earth itself, God's body – suffering in ways we are only beginning to know.

It isn't always going to be this way, you know. The best is yet to come. And love – real love and real life and real justice are possible. This is NOT the best of all possible worlds. Love can be the measure, and peace can be the sign, and justice can flow like a river; like wine from stone jars. This is not a fool's dream. It is the very promise of God.

Of all the things that Jesus' presence among us does – he offers the hope and indeed the promise of a world that is made new; that is ordered in the image of God our Creator. Conceived in love; born to grow in justice and peace.

And somewhere inside even the most jaded of us, we long for this, we reach for it, and when our brains won't let us name it for fear of the pain of its absence, Our bodies enact the hope. Our hearts remember and in our dreams we know the truth. Love is possible. The best is yet to come. We are moving toward a possibility and a promise. Invited to make it real. We believe in love after all.

Most of the time you'd never know it. We're too sophisticated. We live in the “real” world. We compromise, we do the best we can, or not, we make do, we adjust our childish, starry-eyed Christmas-Eve hopes that the morning might bring magic; that it could all be made right.

But then, in the oddest moments, when the light is just right and we're caught off guard, our defenses down, maybe after a bit of wine, maybe at a wedding....

We know.

We remember.

And we embody our deepest hopes in ways that we sometimes don't even realize. Weddings, for example (Now, I know very well the down side of marriage and its history and how it has worked for centuries as an economic institution to serve the ruling system....I do know that. For now, let's leave that part to the work of the daytime. This evening, here at the wedding feast, let's enter the work of the night, where the light is different and we can have a glass of wine and let the lamplight cast a shadow, shall we? I've had enough of the daylight just for now)

In the lamplight, at weddings, we remember. And we act out our deepest dreams. The most jaded people will watch two partners pledge “forever” and get an unexpected lump in their throats – remembering the time when they believed it could be true and not even allowing themselves to hope that it may still be so.

And in communion. Here at the table, our bodies act out what our brains have forgotten. We let the ritual speak for us. All of us, invited to this table. Sharing the bread and wine, power shared, a feast so lavish there is always room for more and the invitation is open....complete acceptance.....acting out our dreams for this world...playing heaven....that's what we're doing here. Playing heaven. Embodying our deepest dreams of how the world can be

And saying a loud and firm "NO" to those who would claim that no change is possible that this is the best of all possible worlds...we know better. We know what is possible and what is promised. A new world, rich and fair and just and peaceful is possible. Is the will of God...is NOT beyond our grasp just right here....right here at this table. We act this out here. The ritual, the gestures, the words, all designed to rehearse the hope and enact the dream and break open the stone jars of history into the rich and flowing wine of what can be.

And I have to say, that as someone who regularly is in a position to watch people's faces at both weddings and as they take communion, watching as you witness two people promise to love each other forever; watching as you reach out and receive bread and wine, - I have to say that at those moments, whole worlds of vulnerability and hope and pain are so very plain, so naked on people's faces...it's beautiful. You believe in love after all. *You believe in love after all.*

A new world is waiting. It starts right here, right now. Bread for everyone. Love forever. Power shared...a feast lavish with the best saved until the end.
A host who also believes in love
And who IS love

So come to the wedding feast – come to the banquet. The musicians are about to play – The wine is flowing – how? I have no idea. It's a miracle. But then so is this day, and you, and this gathering and....and that in spite of everything, we believe in love

The feast is ready the wine is new and
The best is yet to come.
To Life!