

Isaiah 62:1-5
Psalm 36:5-10
1 Corinthians 12:1-11
John 2:1-11

Sermon January 16th, 2022

Jesus Renews Our Energy

In our gospel this morning, Jesus, his mother, and his disciples, get invited to a pretty hopping wedding. They actually run out of wine in the middle of the reception. I don't know about you, but I have been to a lot of wedding receptions. And have yet to see the taps go dry.

Unfortunately, when the reception does dry out, the celebration stops. As they deal with this drought of wine, they also experience this drought of energy.

Do you feel like you are living through a drought of energy? Do you lack motivation and purpose for your life?

I wouldn't be surprised if everyone of us has experienced a drought of energy at least once in our lifetime.

Life can feel overwhelming. Between work, family, friend, and volunteer responsibilities, financial commitments, chores. And then all the challenges that come our way like illness, mental illness, chronic pain, pandemics, relationship problems, grief. Life can feel overwhelming (**Image**).

When I reflect on this drought that the people at the wedding are experiencing, I think of what it feels like when we go through burnout. We start to lose interest in our career. In our hobbies. In our relationships. All the things that used to give us energy now sap us of energy. We start to feel like we are missing something in our lives. We lack purpose and meaning. We can feel depressed. Hopeless. We have no energy, and so often we stop living. We stop doing all these things that used to give us energy. We become like the guests at the wedding. We long for new wine (**Image**).

As a community, we are going through what is being called pandemic fatigue, which looks a lot like burnout. We have had to give up a lot over the past couple of years to try and keep people and ourselves safe. And when we think we are coming to the end of this mess, some new variant seems to set us back. Many of us are frustrated to the point that we struggle to continue to follow the restrictions in place. Many of us are dealing with mental wellness issues as we have grieved so much loss. Our energy for all the things we used to do has dropped off significantly. Many ministries and programs have been put on hold (**Image**). As a community we are experiencing burnout. We are living through a drought of energy. Longing for new wine.

Sometimes it isn't anything as significant as a pandemic or a career burnout that has us feeling this drought of energy. Sometimes it is that feeling of being in a rut. Everything we do starts to become so routine (**Image**), and we get bored of our lives. Sometimes when we are living in a rut, we feel this drought of energy. We long for new wine.

Some scholars read our gospel story that we hear this morning as a metaphor. The people at the wedding represent God's people. The drought of wine represents the lack of energy God's people are feeling living under the Roman Empire. They are struggling in poverty. They are facing abuses. They are living in a constant anxiety of losing their life. It is hard for them to stay faithful. To live out their calling as God's people. When they keep facing obstacle after obstacle.

This is how God's people felt when living in Exile under Babylonian rule. Though Rome did leave some concessions when it came time to them practicing their religion. At least during Jesus's lifetime. In Babylon they couldn't even worship.

When Isaiah comes to the people of Israel, they are living through a drought of energy. Longing for new wine.

Well, Isaiah gives them a taste of this new wine with his hopeful message. Isaiah reassures the people that God will turn their water into wine. God will restore Israel from exile. God will return them home. God will give them new energy. So, they can continue to live out their calling as God's people. Being a light to the nations (**Image**).

In our gospel story this morning, Jesus' mother has seen enough suffering. She tells Jesus to do something about it. Now this leads to some awkward discussion between Jesus and his mother. Something I am not going to get into here, but will leave it for another sermon. Especially, since my own Mother now watches my sermons every week. But, whatever awkwardness comes out of this dialogue, the end result is what matters. And the end result is that Jesus decides to do something to renew the people's energy. Jesus turns these huge jugs of water into wine. And not any wine. The finest wine.

The celebration can carry on (**Image**). The people are happy once again. Full of energy. The disciples are left in awe. Believing that Jesus indeed will give God's people new energy. The empire's oppression of God's people will not stop their energy any more. They feel renewed through this new fine wine to follow Jesus from death to new life.

In the letter to the Corinthians, Paul talks about the gift of the Holy Spirit that renews the disciples, and all believers for that matter. Breathing new energy on them so they are motivated to share their gifts for the sake of the gospel. So, if we see this story as a

metaphor then the Holy Spirit is this new wine that will energize the disciples of all times and places to continue to be Christ's hands and feet in our world. Including us.

Where do you receive new wine when experiencing a drought of energy? What refreshes you so you can live out your calling as Christ's disciples? Or in other words, where do you see the Holy Spirit at work in your lives?

What about in worship? Do you come away on Sunday mornings, whether from your screen or from this sanctuary, feeling refreshed? Feeling full of new energy? New wine?

When I was at Kings University College in Edmonton, I used to attend a Sunday evening Young Adult worship service at this Pentecostal church. When I felt in a rut or was dealing with the burnout that comes with being a university student, I found new energy in the Pastor's sermons at this church (**Image**). His message seemed to really connect with me, and what I was going through. I felt that God was speaking into me new energy through his sermons.

Sometimes a song can really speak to us in a moment of drought. It can lift us up, and give us new energy (**Image**).

Sometimes after a prayer we can feel new energy. We can feel listened to. Hopeful that our circumstances will change. We can see the new direction, in which God is inviting us to go.

Sometimes participating in communion can give us new energy (**Image**). I see this lots in the ministry when I am giving communion to someone in a long-term care home or in the hospital or in any situation where they are feeling this drought of energy. You can see a lift in their spirits when they take and drink this new wine.

Sometimes we experience new energy in the love and support of a community of believers (**Image**). Whether its through their prayers, or through some service they offer us. Like a food service when we are grieving. Or a small group ministry where we can find support from others who are going through a similar experience. We can feel new energy from being part of community. We can taste this new wine that Jesus has to offer us.

Sometimes we need to experience a change for us to get out of this drought. Like changing careers or getting involved in a new ministry that might offer new challenges or starting up a new friendship that helps us see life from a different perspective.

Right now, as a community, we are living through a drought of energy as we continue to deal with this pandemic. Right now, you might be living through a drought of energy for some other reason.

Our gospel reassures us that right now, Jesus is standing here with us. Ready to act. Ready to turn our barrels of water into wine. Ready to breathe new energy in us through the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit that we received in the waters of baptism.

May we find hope in this promise. May we find hope in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Let us pray, gracious God, we are struggling to find the energy to live our lives. To live out our calling as your Son's disciples. Loving one another as you love us. Turn our water into new wine. Give us new energy through the Holy Spirit. So, we can be your hands and feet in this suffering world. Giving people hope in your promise of healing and grace. **Amen.**

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