



Did any of you notice, coming into church today,
the chalk above the door?

Last Sunday, a number of us gathered in the fellowship hall
to learn about Epiphany tradition of Chalking the door.
It's an old practice, started in the Roman Catholic church, of blessing the home
by writing above the door a series of letters and numbers.
The numbers indicate the year, and the letters C, M, B come from
the traditional names for the wise men: Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar
The letters are also an abbreviation for "*Christus Mansionem Benedicat*,"
which means "May Christ bless this dwelling."



We have entered the season of Epiphany
a season which centers the revelation of Christ
as son of God, light of the world.

The story of the wedding at Cana is a great way to start the season.
John tells us that it is the "first of the signs" Jesus performed –
the continuing revelation in John's gospel
of who Jesus is and why he has come.

Chapters 2-12 in John's gospel are sometimes called the Book of Signs.
John tells stories of encounters with Jesus which reveal who Jesus is
and why he has come.

Some of these encounters are called signs - turning water into wine,
feeding the 5,000 and walking on the sea, and a number of healing stories.
The sign itself is often followed by a description of what the sign means
and how the people involved respond to the sign.
In the coming weeks, as we read through the gospel of John,
we will explore a number of the signs of Jesus.

The signs in John's gospel operate on two levels.
They are symbolic, pointing beyond the story to say something about Jesus.
And they are also material, events and encounters that happen
in real world settings and in community.
We might call the signs miracles,

which highlights supernatural aspect of these encounters.
For John, it is not the supernatural element that is important.
John wants us to know that the power Jesus uses comes from God,
that it reveals Jesus as the Word made flesh
who uses his power to work for God's mission of abundant life for all people.



Within the set of signs that Jesus does,
I've often wondered if the wedding at Cana really fits.
Compared to healing or the miraculous feeding it seems a bit – frivolous.
Yet perhaps that ordinary life feel is exactly what makes this
a good sign to start with.
As the word made flesh, Jesus participates in community life.
He shares the daily concerns of human life,
such as celebrating together, enjoying good food and wine,
and avoiding the shame that would come with a failure of hospitality.

There is a message in this sign –
in the amount of wine – 120 gallons!
and the quality of the wine – excellent!
Jesus provides for the people, and he provides abundantly,
and he provides for their enjoyment and pleasure.

It is like an echo of the psalm which reminds us that God who
“stretched out the heavens like a tent,”
and “set the earth on its foundations,”
is also the God who “brings forth food from the earth,
and wine to gladden the human heart, and oil to make the face shine.”

It reminds us of the God who, through the prophet Isaiah, invites us,
*Hear, everyone who thirsts;
come to the waters;
and you who have no money,
come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk
without money and without price.*

Jesus is one with this God of providence and abundance.
Jesus, the logos who was present at the creation of the world,

works in and through the stuff of this world to give blessing.

In her commentary on this story, Gennifer Brooks reminds us that this first sign happens not in a religious setting, but in a social one – a party.

She writes,

I think it is a good reminder that our Christian faith is expressed in our ordinary relationships and not only when we gather as the church.

Jesus' engaging with his community in a fun activity and taking actions that revealed his glory cues us to consider our Christian witness as being appropriate to all aspects of life and worthy of being carried out in ways that give glory to God whenever, wherever, and however we gather in community.

Just as we know Jesus is with us in all the moments of our ordinary lives, we can also seek to witness to Jesus in all the parts of our daily lives.



Yesterday I was at a town hall meeting offered by west side legislators –
Rep. Joy Garratt, Rep Charlotte Little, and Sen. Harold Pope.

Reps Garratt and Little are joining other westside Reps
in another town hall meeting next Saturday, if you are interested.

They were talking about the modernization of the NM legislature,
and how long people have been working at it,
with some little progress made.

Joy Garratt told the story that years ago, when she was new to the House,
a bill she had supported had not passed and she had been very upset
when she ran into Ruth Hoffman of Lutheran Advocacy Ministry.

And Ruth encouraged her to keep at it,
reminding her that it took 10 years to repeal the death penalty.

How wonderful to have our faith-based advocacy lifted up
in such a way in that forum.

It wasn't Rep. Garratt's point, but I thought, this reminds everyone in the room
that people of faith engage in community in positive, life-giving ways.

We write letters and make phone calls to our legislators.

We gather food for people in our neighborhood who are hungry;
blankets and jackets for those who are cold.

We practice kindness and give people the benefit of the doubt,
knowing that each person is God's beloved child

and God's wish for them is abundant life.
We put chalk on our doorway, reminding us that our life of faith
is part of our ordinary life,
blessed by the one who became flesh to live among us.

Perhaps in this way, we too can be signs – signs that point beyond ourselves,
to the one who created us, who loves and sustains us.
Our community can be a sign of God's inclusive love,
empowered by the Holy Spirit,
living out God's vision of abundant life for all.

May it be so.
Amen.