

God may reveal your power and glory in all words spoken to honor you and in all hearts that try to love you. Amen.

Good morning!

The season of Epiphany is all about revelation. It's the time of year when we dive into the scriptures that tell us about Jesus' early ministry—moments when he begins to step into his identity and vocation as fully God and fully human.

Epiphany is a season of *sparkling mystery*. It invites us to reflect on the ways God reveals truth, light, and love—not just to the people in the Bible, but to us. What does today's Gospel reading reveal to us? Plenty!

We find Jesus at a wedding—celebrating with friends and family. We see his humanity in so many ways. His relationship with his mom is complex. He enjoys good wine. And yet, we also catch a glimpse of his divinity. Jesus ominously knows his time is coming. His mother speaks with authority, nudging him toward action. And when he sees these enormous clay jars—intended for the Jewish purification rituals—he chooses to fill them, not with cleansing water, but with excellent wine.

Let's take a moment to sit with that image. Jesus doesn't let the wine flow straight into guests' glasses. No, he takes these religious jars, these vessels of ritual purity, and fills *them* with the finest wine. It would be like wine miraculously appearing in the Baptismal font at church—wine that's poured out for everyone at a wedding feast.

There's so much we could explore in this passage, but today I'd like to focus on this miraculous show of *power* from Jesus.

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When I say "power," I'm talking about the ability to change and influence things. Power isn't inherently good or bad—it's what we do with it that matters.

Humans have a complicated relationship with power.

Last week's episode of *This American Life* featured a story that perfectly illustrates this. It was about a bus driver who believed it was morally wrong for him to open the door for passengers who were running late—even if they were just seconds behind. From his perspective, even a 30-second delay to let someone on the bus would cost every passenger a few seconds of their time. And, to him, that wasn't fair.

The story takes an even stranger turn when we learn that, as a child, this man had two life ambitions: to become God, or to become a bus driver.

Even as a child, he craved power—the kind of power that would let him uphold his ideals, whether that was justice or efficiency. And while this might sound harmless, it shows how tricky power can be.

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Power dynamics are everywhere—parent and child, boss and employee, celebrity and fan, older and younger. Even our relationship with God has been described as an “I/Thou” relationship, one in which power plays a central role.

But here's the thing about human power: we often get it wrong.

Some of us thrive in power structures, instinctively knowing how to influence others. But for others, those systems feel like a trap. Either way, we make a critical error when we assume that, if we were in charge, the world would be better.

The truth is, power can be a dangerous thing when it's misused. And yet, as Christians, we're invited to follow Jesus' example—to hold power differently.

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We teach the kids in Godly Play that Jesus was a different kind of king. He didn't arrive with fancy robes or a massive army. He came as a fragile, precious infant—just like the rest of us.

But make no mistake, Jesus *had* power. The Gospel of John tells us about seven miraculous signs—today's reading is the first. He turns water into wine. Later, he heals the sick, feeds the hungry, walks on water, and even raises the dead.

What stands out in every one of these miracles is how Jesus uses his power—not to exclude, punish, or control, but to uplift, restore, and bless.

Jesus didn't calculate whether people deserved his miracles. He didn't withhold healing until someone proved their worth. His power wasn't about policies or punishments. It was about compassion.

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Tomorrow, we honor the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who had a profound understanding of real power.

Dr. King once said:

*"Power without love is reckless and abusive. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love."*

Whenever power is misused by the callous or cold-hearted, the church is called to bear witness and act with the power of faith—the power of *compassion*. The power of Jesus.

Whatever power or influence we have as individuals must follow Jesus' example. It's not about clinging to control or enforcing our ideals. It's about uplifting others, healing the broken, and sharing the good wine of God's love.

So today, I invite you: fill your jars to the brim with good wine. Share it generously. Let your power be guided by love.

Amen.