

Year C, Epiphany 3,
January 27, 2019
Hope Central Church
The Rev. Laura Ruth Jarrett

Psalm 36:5-10

Your steadfast love, O God, extends to the heavens,
your faithfulness to the clouds.
Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains,
your judgements are like the great deep;
you save humans and animals alike, O God.
How precious is your steadfast love, O God!
All people may take refuge in the shadow of your wings.
They feast on the abundance of your house,
and you give them drink from the river of your delights.
For with you is the fountain of life;
in your light we see light.
O continue your steadfast love to those who know you,
and your salvation to the upright of heart!

John 2:1-11

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and the disciples had also been invited to the wedding. 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." Now standing there were six stone water-jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, "Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward." So they took it. When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now." Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in Jesus.

In Celebration of the life and work of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Epiphany called by another name, is the season of coming out - the revelation of Jesus as divine being given life on this earth by Mary, the revelation of Jesus to the world in the persons of the Magi, the revelation of Jesus in the temple as an infant and as 13 year old, and today the revelation of Jesus' divine capacities in public in the miracle of the changing the water into wine.

There are layers in every story and every time we tell it, we reveal a layer. I want to suggest a layer and that is the problem of the wine - why wasn't there enough wine and what kind of shame is there in running out over the course of a three day wedding ceremony?

Were the families poor? Could only so much wine be afforded? Did the family say to each other, "family hold back," so to stretch the wine for three days?

Could Mary have noticed and known the shame of the bride's family being exposed as poor? Did she know, as all mothers seem to know early the true nature of their children? - No, I've known since he was 5. Did Mary call on Jesus to come out as divine before he was ready for all

the reasons one might not be ready to tell the family, the neighbors, the congregation - even if by not telling, not coming out, the development and delivery of his divine gifts to the world were thwarted by what the the family might think or the danger of revealing himself in a system of empire that hounded, impoverished, murdered it's people for the sake of the enrichment of a few in Rome.

The parallels between the empire of Rome and the Empire of the United States of America were and are strong. Dr. King understood and used the teaching of Jesus, whose foundation of economic equity were codified in Leviticus and Deutoromony more than three thousand years ago for the fair treatment of workers and wages.

"You shall not hold the payment of a worker overnight until the morning." Leviticus 19:13.

"On his day [of work] you should give his wages, the sun should not set on it, because he is a poor man and his life depends on it..." Deuteronomy 24:15

This rings so true given our current iteration of empire.

What Jesus wanted and called for his people was to bring good news to the poor. to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and freedom to the prisoner.

In 1965-1968, Dr. King put it this way with the Poor People's Campaign's Economic Bill of Rights for all Americans, which included five pillars:

- a meaningful job at a living wage;
- a secure and adequate income;
- access to land;
- access to capital, especially for poor people and minorities; and
- the ability for ordinary people to "play a truly significant role" in the government.

And this is what we want, too. Economic Equity. In a time when the average capital of a black family is \$8, we want economic equity as defined today this way: each person and family has enough for what we need so that our gifts and skills may be developed and delivered to the world on behalf of us all. This a Christian principal built on ancient Jewish practice.

There is no better time than now to watch how powers and principalities conspire against its own people for the enrichment of a few. We have witnessed and experienced the building and selling of a false reality that those seeking asylum in the US bring disease, drugs, and crime and we know this false reality to be a product of an economy built to enrich and few t the expense of many. Oh, I used to think that economic cruelty was a by product of an economic system meant to allow anyone willing to work hard enough to get rich. But now I understand that cruelty is necessary to the success of the enrichment of a few.

We have seen such an example The shutting of our federal government for 35 days as a play for the building of a wall not needed nor wanted, nor even thought to be efficacious for its stated purpose on our southern boarder is such an example. The redlining of the black communities - the inability to gain a mortgage in historically black neighborhoods after the end of WWII and since leaves a legacy of economic iniquity so vast and pervasive that the average black family in Boston last year was \$8. The cost of a steak, two packs of cigarettes or two coffees, or one month's Netflix.

Families are destroyed by unpredictable incarceration unattached to any crime or calculable reason other than having been born in a family of color - and the economic disruption, the loss of wages while in jail or the professional line beyond which no person of color, no immigrant, no woman, no queer person could venture in our system of capitalism is chalked up to

personal character. We are taught that only the good people can succeed and they happen to be white, or have inherited wealth, or got lucky only so to serve as a token. And so to succeed, we try to be white, try to be good in ways that we see projected in media, the suburbs, and in our tortured stories.

We all get got in such a system, with the bigger toll paid by the poor. We are all performing some roll in the system, each according to our class and race and gender expression.

It is dangerous friends to question the operation of capitalism, of empire. We know because of the murder of Jesus and the murder of Dr. King. It is dangerous to say that capitalism is a system by which elders betray the next generation, those whom they ought be mentoring and parenting - for the want of a profit. Our culture teaches that the making of profit is proof of one's goodness or rightness or worthiness instead of teaching that the making of monstrous profit over and above one's needs is a measure of one's willingness to participate in the the monstrous harm caused by poverty, the shame of those unable to provide for their families, the trauma of constant violence and threat of violence, and also, and also, and also the incalculable damage of learning that one has been taught not to see each human as human, the guilt of having more than one could ever need, and the gap between one's worthiness and usefulness in the face of way too much or way too little resources.

To understand what keeps us from achieving this equity, we must understand the economic system that keeps us from equity. We must know what equity is and means. We must call for and put into place what would allow for equity. We must also understand what keeps us from being willing to understand how our own economic houses work or don't.

We carry so much shame my friends. I know because I've heard us talk about it - shame for how little we have, how much we have. We have shame because we seem unsuccessful, shame because we're scared all the time that we'll run out of money REGARDLESS of the amount in our accounts, under our beds, or in our wallets. We who have experienced trauma feel the shame acutely because it replicates the power used against us and our powerlessness.

This is what it seems we have in common, we can't talk about capitalism or about our paycheck or government check or scholarship check or interest check without shame - and this keeps us from sharing the information we need to know if we're normal, or OK, or if we're poor or rich or very rich. It seems we cannot talk about it to each other for fear we will be seen and known. We don't even know how to compare, to mirror each other's reality. We have our coming out stories, or birth stories, or stories about what happened to us when we were kids, stories about getting sober but we don't tell our money stories our class stories. I would like to ask us to begin, so gently, so tenderly, so compassionately, so slowly to begin to tell our money stories, which might be different from our class stories. I want for us to begin to understand, as we are ready, as a people, to try to puzzle out what our race, or class, or gender or sexuality has to do with with money - all toward the goal of a spiritual and liberating sense of our common financial life - so that we may be free, so that we share, so that our lives may be robus, robust together.

I want to ask us to begin, by sharing a common story of two young men in episode five of Marie Kondo's *Tidying up* series, "From Students to Improvements," - did you get to see it?

Marie Kondo is invited into the home of two young men who have fallen in love and are making a home together. They want to tidy up because their place feels like a dorm room, parents are coming. They want to be able to present themselves to the parents, both so the parents will see them as mature, and see that their love is legit.

Marie Kondo enters their home as she does every home. First, she listens to them. Then she kneels on the floor to listen to the *kami*, the spirits, the divine in the room, to introduce herself, to revere the spirits, and to thank them and the objects in which they dwell for the work they have done on behalf of our couple's lives. **Then, Marie teaches the young men about joy, the spark of joy. Marie asks them to identify the experience of joy in their bodies, so they will recognize joy because joy will become the meter by which the process of keeping or releasing objects is decided.**

Then starting with clothes, then papers, then books, and so forth, each object is held to see if joy registers, if joy has retired, if joy has never been present there. If there is no registration of joy, the object is thanked, released and given away or thrown away. If joy is present, the object is folded in such a respectful way that it and the divinity in it may be revered, so that it and they may be of use.

After the long hours of heart wrenching work, the clutter and the clinging to the old is released, the shame of the young men is reduced, and they become new people. They have become not masters of the universe, but they have worked in their sphere and they have learned joy. They have learned the practice of reverence and the mature skill of seeing what is helpful and releasing what is not. They are transformed by the work. This is what I wish for our congregation.

This week, I wanted us as a congregation to experience this maturing moment so that we too begin to see shame as installed by what does not love us and to clear out the thicket of practices that keep us bound to what keeps us blind. I long for us to transformed by joy.

Later this week, I'll send to you a survey asking you to ask for the learning and skill you and we together need so to be transformed by joy. Bob Thomas has agreed to teach we who would like some simple skills we need so to gain confidence in budgeting, in managing the little or big wealth that is ours. In Lent we will take up preaching and teaching about financial health and economic equity, telling our money coming out stories. We assume and assure you that we know that financial health is never formed outside the larger economic system and it's violence and rewards.

We hope for our lives to be transformed by joy - we await metaphorically for the better wine that Jesus in his power and by his teaching can provide. We are promised, and we deserve joy.