

# A Drink of Delight

John 2: 1-11

The tragic after-effects of earthquake scenes of devastation overwhelmed our senses this past week. The January earthquake was just the most recent in a series of natural and man-made tragedies in Haitian history that have kept the people mired in poverty. Haiti is a country that, in some ways, has experienced perpetual exile with little real hope of becoming more than a source of pity, charity, and often neglect by other nations.

A place like Haiti today resembles, in many ways, the people of Israel during their long years of exile especially in Babylon. They felt cut-off, desolate, hopeless, and forgotten. The other evening, as the Crossroads band began our rehearsal for today's service, we prayed for the people of Haiti. Someone voiced what was on all our minds: "It's so tragic! I don't have the words. I don't know what to pray." My mind went to the Apostle Paul's words to the believers who were suffering in Rome. "The Spirit helps us in our weakness. ... We do not know how to pray..., but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words." (Romans 8:26)

That same Spirit who binds all people as one, unites us with the suffering people in Haiti. Right now, the Spirit comforts all of us with assurance that we are not alone; and is telling the Haitian people the same message given to Israel in exile. "You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord; no more be called *Forsaken*, but you shall be called *My Delight*, for the Lord delights in you." (Is. 62: 3-4) People of Haiti, you are beloved of God, greatly cherished, deeply loved, and the object of God's delight. This is a message we all need to hear:

You are beloved of God  
greatly cherished  
deeply loved  
object of God's delight

The story often called Jesus' first miracle was, curiously, changing water into wine at the marriage feast in Cana of Galilee. It is curious because this wine has little to do with Communion, the Last Supper, the Eucharistic Celebration. It was a celebration, a wedding. It was a communion of friends and family. Jesus changed the water of necessity into a drink of delight: the best wine of all.

Whatever actually happened in Cana of Galilee, this story has an important meaning. It has fleshed out Isaiah's glorious message that God delights in us. The marriage feast wine represents that delight. Jesus himself had the reputation among some as a *party guy* who enjoyed wine and celebrations with friends. Crossroads Church followed his example. She was born in a brewery. For many years, there was a workgroup for *fun* and *play*. There has always been a high priority placed on having fun together, on taking delight in each other.

Now a disclaimer! This is not a sermon advocating drinking wine or any other form of alcohol. Alcohol can be addictive and that is not delightful. This message is about delight as a deep and basic way to follow Jesus, to be in God. It is to trust that God takes delight in each of us, in all of us. God delights in us and invites us to take delight in ourselves and in each other. Yet how seldom we're in touch with being the object of God's delight? If we can drink in some of that delight, the more we'll be able to embrace ourselves and others. The less likely we will judge others or ourselves. Delight is the Spirit of God with us and the nature of God within us. Being church means to embody delight.

What or who in your life delights you? Is there anyone in your life who delights in you? Delight is how the Bible describes God's attitude toward us. Is that easy for you to accept – God delighting in you? Is it easy for you to feel delight in another? Or is it more difficult for you to feel delighted? To feel delight in life or in another is a sign of wholeness. To the extent it's hard for us to feel such delight, as has been my experience for much of my life, this is a reminder of the division in our lives, the division between the inner and outer life.

Being church is being a circle of community filled with smaller circles of trust. As a congregation, we share a common commitment to change the world. Our commitment is to change it according to the image of the dream of God. This vision is of shalom

peace

ubuntu

wholeness

salaam

awake to our shared life within the life of God.

We can change the world not by coercion or force, but by example and prayer. We must share the fruit of our life as community around us and in cooperation with other communities of faith in Kansas City and beyond.

We grow the fruit of our life in smaller groups, circles of trust, through practices of prayer. In circles of trust, we learn to delight in others – to love them and to love and take delight in ourselves. This poem by Derek Wolcott illustrates what can happen:

The time will come when, with elation,

You will greet yourself arriving

at your own door,

in your own mirror,

And each will smile

at the other's welcome,

and say, sit here, Eat.

You will love again the stranger

who was your self.

Give wine. Give bread.

Give back your heart

to itself, to the stranger

who has loved you all your life,

whom you ignored for another,

who knows you by heart.

Take down the love letters

from the bookshelf,

the photographs,

the desperate notes,

Peel your own image from the mirror.

Sit. Feast on your life

(Derek Wolcott, "Love After Love," *Collected Poems*, Noonday Press, 328)

We cannot change the world unless we are willing to change ourselves, unless we are willing to listen to the Spirit, our inner teacher. Treat your inner journey with respect. It is yours. It is precious. Find or begin a circle of trust. Hold space for yourself and others to grow. Learn to love yourself, love your friends, love your enemies. Take delight in the rich tapestry of taste,

practice, manner, and perspective. We look around us at each other and in the mirror, and we see God. And she is delightful and delights in all of us. One nineteenth-century spiritual director said it in these words:

Accustom yourself to the wonderful thought that God loves You with a tenderness, a generosity, and an intimacy that surpasses all your dreams. Rejoice that you are what you are, for our Lord loves you very dearly, loves the whole of you, just as you are.

*Abbe de Tourville, Letters of Direction*