

Redeemed with new wine (Isaiah 62:1-5; Psalm 36:5-10; John 2:1-11)

Any conversation about salvation should include both an eschatological aspect and one that is relevant to our lives here and now.

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Weddings are supposed to be a time of joy, celebration, and communal sharing. Isaiah talks about how when a young couple decides to get married, God rejoices over them.

A few months ago, I had a conversation with a young couple about to get married. Their excitement was evident as I asked them to share about how they decided to get married and why they wanted to have me bless their union. “We want the people we love to join us and witness the beginning of our new life together, and we want God to always be with us” was the bride’s response.

Her words reminded me that as the church of Christ, we are the bride, and God is the bridegroom. As we come together for worship—in person, virtually, or in a hybrid format—we are rehearsing for the great banquet in heaven, for the ultimate wedding, where the cloud of witnesses will be there and God will always be with us.

In the meantime, we also need to remember what the psalmist reminds us: that God’s desire for humans, animals, and the whole creation is to have the assurance of salvation. Soteriology is a complex field, but any conversation about salvation should include both an eschatological aspect that we cannot fully understand or explain and an aspect that is relevant to our lives here and now.

The Wedding at Cana establishes Jesus' ministerial tone—an incarnational ministry. In a time when many still seek to separate what is worldly from what is from God, this story challenges us instead to identify what needs to be redeemed in our world so that it is in alignment with God's desires for us. Even more, we are challenged to trust, obey, and believe, so that we can experience the activation of the gifts of the Spirit in our lives and consequently be witnesses of the redeeming power of Jesus.

What needs the transformative and redeeming power of Jesus today? The ongoing manifestations of colonization and its damage need the redeeming touch of Jesus. Missions, evangelism, and worship keep reflecting unhealthy motives; all these areas need the redeeming touch of Jesus. Religious institutions keep prioritizing keeping the status quo or the bottom line instead of seeking total transformation and redemption.

As the body of Christ on earth, we often function from a place of scarcity, from a shortage of wine. The Gospel lesson this week reminds us that Jesus can bring new wine if we can trust, obey, and believe in his power.