

“On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding” - John 2:1-2 NRSV

Most weddings are joyous celebrations! I recall one when we were in Downeast Maine that made the news: The police had to be called because the celebration got a little out of hand (it was after we had left!). They were celebrating and someone had brought fireworks which were against the law. I am told that after a long lecture no charges were filed! And, the celebration was able to continue inside.

Weddings in Jesus' day could last for days. It was truly a community celebration. Jesus might have been known to the bride and groom but probably not the disciples. But, it was a wedding, a celebration, the more the merrier. Come and join us - we are making a commitment to one another. We are in love (maybe, it could have been an arranged marriage) but still a celebration. Share with us in the love, laughter and wine!

The story continues that they ran out of wine. They are six stone jars, each containing between 20 and 30 gallons. Jesus turned the water in these six jars into the finest wine the steward had ever tasted. Think of it — the size of a party that needed 120 to 180 gallons of wine because they have run out of the wine they had! There will be celebrations, laughter and celebrations! I wonder, have we lost our ability to celebrate?

Growing up I lived near a Catholic church that had a fair every summer. There were rides, games, food booths and a real sense of celebration. I wondered why they had so much fun and my Baptist church had so little. What were they celebrating that we were not? Why could they have fun and we couldn't. Calvin probably would have been proud of us! But, we Baptist boys always found an excuse to go to the Catholic fair. We had some of our Catholic friends invite us and convince their parents to let us tag along. It was a money raiser yes, but it was also a time of community and a time of celebration.

I remember a movie that came out in the 60's (cannot remember name, etc.). The one scene that still is in my memory is one of Jesus and the disciples skipping down the road, laughing and singing together. They were enjoying life. I imagine that Jesus enjoyed life. He liked dinner parties, weddings and being with people. I am confident that they were not solemn occasions where no one smiled and no stories were told. Children were there - even on his lap. Ordinary people having fun. They may have gone on picnics, shared in stories and laughter - weddings are celebrations - even evening meals can be an event for sharing and laughter.

Maybe we need to learn to celebrate more. After all, we have the greatest message in the world: Christ is Risen from the dead. We have been liberated. In the pictures and films I have seen from cities liberated after WWII the people are celebrating the good news of liberation and freedom. We have been set free from the guilt and sin that once weighed us down. Should this not be a reason to celebrate? Should we not be rocking the world with our joyous celebrations? Parties should abound. Worship should be celebrations. Christ is Risen! The barriers between us and God have been taken down and the relationship restored.

We have friends who recently spent two week in Lindisfarne, Scotland. One of the adventures they had was climbing the cliffs to where the monks used to go to pray. The monks would spend hours, even days there in prayer. There our friends stopped, prayed and reflected on the spirituality of the island and their lives. It was, for them, a moving experience. But, they also met and made friends on the island, had great times of fellowship, a few glasses of wine in celebration with friends, both old and new. In reading of their adventures it was a time both reflection, prayer and celebration. They seem have found the right mix - not denying the moments of quiet solitude nor denying the moments of fun and celebration.

We need both in our lives. But, why should our celebrations be outside the church? On Sunday, June 28 we are going to celebrate laughter in worship! The exact program is being worked out - any ideas would be greatly appreciated. How can we celebrate laughter in worship? How can we discover the joy that is ours in Christ together in community? Clowning began in the church! Much of the art we enjoy today began in the church. The church has a long history of celebrating creation through creating, even with laughter. The monks prayed but also made some fine wines.

Jesus and the disciples went to a wedding. I am sure they did not sit in the corner and shake their heads at the wedding guests and their celebrations. Can you see Jesus dancing with bride? Or, with Mary? After all, there were gallons and gallons of the best wine ever created!