

We are a practical people, for the most part. We look for practical solutions to our problems. But, stop and think about it. Our God is seldom practical. God seldom does what the world would deem practical. Paul, as he wrote to the congregation in Corinth, gives us these words, *“For God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God’s weakness is stronger than human strength...God chose what is foolish in the world...God chose what is weak...God chose what is low and despised”* (1 Cor. 1:25-29). God does not work the way we do. God does not often deal in the practical.

In our New Testament text today we have a wedding, a problem and an impractical solution. Jesus is beginning to call his disciples. He is starting his ministry. First though, there is a wedding. He is an invited guest. Mary and the family are there. Now, weddings were a community celebration. They could last for days. Now whether it was poor planning or too many guests they run out of wine. We may not fully understand the implications of that on the host family but it is a problem.

Mary simply tells the servants (we don’t know how she found out), “Do what he (Jesus) tells you to do.” She is confident that Jesus can take care of it. There are six (6) jars for ceremonial washing, each holding 20 - 40 gallons, near by. They are empty. Jesus simply says to fill the jars with water and then take the water to the steward of the wedding. It is the best wine he has ever tasted. The custom is reversed. The best wine is served first while the guests still have some taste buds. Later the cheap stuff is brought out - but here is the best. It is not practical. Why wait and serve the best wine at the end? It goes against the accepted norms.

Stop and look at how impractical God is. A few instructions from Scriptures:

- \* When someone hits you, turn the other cheek (Mt. 5:39).
- \* When asked to do something, go the extra mile. Do more than expected (Mt. 5:41).
- \* Love your enemies and pray for those who would harm you (Mt. 5:44)
- \* Feed your enemies (Prov. 25:21-22; Romans 12:20)
- \* If you want to find your life, lose it (Mt. 10:39)
- \* It is better to give than to receive (Acts 30:35)
- \* To be forgiven you have to forgive (Mt. 6:14-15)

Now, which one of these is practical? Responses like this should be turning the world up-side-down. They are impractical. They are not what the world expects. We say they won’t work. Jesus says they will. If you want another impractical solution, look at Mt. 26:53. Here Matthew says that Jesus could have called legions of angels to come and rescue him from the cross. All he had to do was “say the word”. This would be the practical solution. Use what you have to save yourself. But, that was not the solution chosen. The practical one would not redeem the world.

Impractical is not practical. Impractical requires faith. Mary’s words to the servants were that they were to listen to Jesus. They are to do what Jesus says they are to do. Can you hear the servants mumbling as they fill the jars with water? How is this going to help a wedding running out of wine? Shouldn’t they be heading out to the local vineyard to see if there is any wine left — any wine will do? Mary has the faith that Jesus will do what needs to be done and that the servants will follow his instructions.

This is not at the beginning but at the end. It is impractical. Why should we listen now? Maybe we run to the practical too fast. After all, the practical solutions are the ones that make the most sense in the world’s eyes. We make a list of plus and minuses, the pros and cons. We

consult experts in the field. We want to know what we should do. What is the practical approach? We examine our options. Then, for the most part we decide on the practical solution. We seldom look at the impractical solutions, because they are just that, impractical. They push us to think beyond the limits of what we know is possible. They are beyond what we may have the strength and ability to do.

A post on Facebook this week went something like: “People who don’t vote because they say one vote won’t make a difference have no problem buying a Powerball ticket.” They have better odds of being elected president than they do of winning Powerball but people stood in line for hours for a chance - impractical at best.

I remember two congregations facing difficult times. The solution was for them to disband but they decided to merge. One was Christian, the other was Jewish. They discovered that they could both use the same building - they had need of it on different days. There were some things that they could do together — impractical or practical?

We are not called to be a practical people. The resurrection should have taken care of that. New life comes because of the cross and death. It was not the right solution, but it was God’s solution. We are worthy not because of what we have done, but because of what Christ was willing to do for us. It is not because we have been practical but because God had an impractical solution to our need.

Amazing.

Go and fill the jars with water.

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NIV, New International Bible Society, Zondervan, 1973, 1978, 1985  
NRSV, Division of Christian Education, NCC, 1989