

## “Fun At Parties”

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January 19, 2025  
The Second Sunday after Epiphany  
St. Michael's Episcopal Church  
Independence, MO

May I speak with the Breath of God, from the Word of God, in the Name of God. Amen.

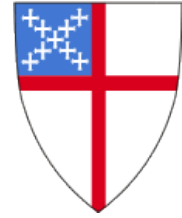
- There's a comedian named Mike Birbiglia
  - Who talks about his religious upbringing, and some of the funny sayings that came out of it
  - He recalls the times he asked his mother for permission to do something, like go the mall with his friends.
  - And when his mother didn't want to give him permission, she would often say "Like *fun* are you going to the mall!"
  - This was confusing to young Mike Birbiglia.
  - "Right! You know, arcades, stores, food court. Like fun!"
- In his stand-up he tells his audience that it wasn't till years later he realized that the word "fun" was a euphemism for the word "hell"
  - His mom was saying "Like hell you're going,"
  - But she was too pious to say "like hell"
  - So she needed a substitute word
  - And in the mind of Mike's mom, and unfortunately many other pious people...
  - "Fun" is "hell"
  - In other words, it's sinful to have fun.
  - People of faith should be serious! Dour! Boring!
  - And should certainly not have children who grow up to be stand-up comedians!
- All that to say, Mike Birbiglia has lots of fans but he's a disappointment to his parents.
  - But should he be?
- One of the common sarcastic retorts I hear when a person is being painfully pedantic, or persnickety, or morose, is...

- Wow, you must be fun at parties.
- Mike Birbiglia is hilarious, and a great storyteller
- So I would assume he's really is fun at parties
- His parents not so much.
- Knowing my audience like I do, I'm going to assume you're on Mike Birbiglia's side.
  - It's good to have fun. But humor me for a moment, and ask yourself "why"?
  - Why do we want to laugh, and dance, and have fun?
  - Sometimes, it could be because we're trying to distract ourselves from pain or discomfort
  - The word "diversion" underscores this type of fun.
  - But in its essence, fun is a celebration of abundant life
  - It's a childlike trust in the goodness of God, no matter what's going on around us.
  - That's why kids are so much better at parties than adults.
  - They don't need artificial stimulants to have fun like adults
  - Kids are just plain fun at parties.
- So let me ask you this: Do you think Jesus was fun at parties?
  - I think most of his followers would say no.
  - And a pretty big chunk of his followers might even be offended by the question.
  - "It's irrelevant whether Jesus would be fun at parties. Jesus didn't go to parties! Sinful things happen at parties!"
  - "So if Jesus did find himself at a party for some reason, he would probably be the one trying to break it up. Like the police responding to a noise complaint. Or like if Mike Birbiglia's parents got home earlier than expected."
  - "Party's over. Jesus is here."

- That probably belongs on some church signs.
- But that's not the Jesus I know. Not at all.
  - It's safe to say Jesus didn't go to any frat parties or keggers.
  - But in the Ancient Near East, the biggest party around was always, what?
  - A wedding!
  - Now, I've never been to an Ancient Near Eastern Wedding
  - But Christina and I did go to Macedonia to see a friend of ours get married.
  - And I feel like that gave us a glimpse of what a party in First-Century Israel might have been like
  - It wasn't just an afternoon and an evening. It was a multiple-day affair
  - There was a massive feast, with all the finest food and adult beverages
  - And the music and the dancing would go on for hours and hours
  - Now that was a party.
- There's no reason to assume Jesus had any objections to this!
  - In fact, the TV series about Jesus called The Chosen affirms it.
  - Jesus is eating and drinking and dancing and laughing the whole time
  - And he's not serious for a moment, until his mother takes him aside to tell him the hosts have run out of wine.
  - (Unlike Mike Birbiglia's mother, Jesus' mother knows how to party.)
  - She doesn't want the festivities to end, but more importantly, she doesn't want the hosts to be humiliated by coming up short.
- So Mary tells Jesus he has to do something
  - But Jesus has never done a public miracle before

- Perhaps he has done a few private ones, but so far his messianic purpose is still a secret.
- He knows that if he does this thing... if he miraculously makes more wine to save his friends' reputation, there will be no going back. No more private life. No more anonymity. No more normalcy.
- As we all know, Jesus did in fact turn water into wine.
  - Lots of it. And excellent wine, too.
  - And his friends were amazed and relieved, and to celebrate, of course they drank more wine!
- What's incredible to me, is that not only did Jesus do a miracle for the sheer purpose of fun, it was his very first public miracle.
  - This is the miracle that set the tone for all his miracles
  - Not healing the blind, or casting out a demon
  - Or even feeding a crowd
  - But fueling a party.
  - When his mother asked him to make more wine, Jesus said "Like fun!" Except when he said "fun", he meant it.
- The rest of Jesus' years of ministry were decidedly less fun. At least, that's how the gospels record it.
  - But we have this blessing from the gospel of John to remind us that Jesus is, in fact, fun at parties
  - And that the author and perfecter of our faith, also cares about our joy. He wants us to dance and laugh and sing together. He wants us to find our fulfillment in celebration with one another
  - Trusting that the goodness of God... and the fun of life will carry us through any hell the world has to offer.
  - Amen.

The Lessons Appointed for Use on the  
**Second Sunday after the Epiphany**



Year C  
RCL

Isaiah 62:1-5  
1 Corinthians 12:1-11  
John 2:1-11  
Psalm 36:5-10

### **The Collect**

Almighty God, whose Son our Savior Jesus Christ is the light of the world: Grant that your people, illumined by your Word and Sacraments, may shine with the radiance of Christ's glory, that he may be known, worshipped, and obeyed to the ends of the earth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

### **Old Testament**

#### **Isaiah 62:1-5**

For Zion's sake I will not keep silent,  
and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest,  
until her vindication shines out like the dawn,  
and her salvation like a burning torch.

The nations shall see your vindication,  
and all the kings your glory;  
and you shall be called by a new name  
that the mouth of the LORD will give.

You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD,  
and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.

You shall no more be termed Forsaken,  
and your land shall no more be termed Desolate;  
but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her,  
and your land Married;  
for the LORD delights in you,  
and your land shall be married.  
For as a young man marries a young woman,  
so shall your builder marry you,  
and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride,  
so shall your God rejoice over you.

## **The Psalm**

### **Psalm 36:5-10**

#### *Dixit injustus*

- 5 Your love, O LORD, reaches to the heavens, \*  
and your faithfulness to the clouds.
- 6 Your righteousness is like the strong mountains,  
your justice like the great deep; \*  
you save both man and beast, O LORD.
- 7 How priceless is your love, O God! \*  
your people take refuge under the shadow of your wings.
- 8 They feast upon the abundance of your house; \*  
you give them drink from the river of your delights.
- 9 For with you is the well of life, \*  
and in your light we see light.
- 10 Continue your loving-kindness to those who know you, \*  
and your favor to those who are true of heart.

## **The New Testament**

## **1 Corinthians 12:1-11**

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. You know that when you were pagans, you were enticed and led astray to idols that could not speak. Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says "Let Jesus be cursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit.

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.

## **The Gospel**

### **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 his 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 them, "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 him.

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*Optional parts of the readings are set off in square brackets.*

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