

Talk @ what do you get a couple who has everything? When marry at a later age. Recent studies/surveys show, if couples marry at all it will be at a later age. My sister and her husband – doctor and a lawyer.

Many times couples who marry later will have more household things. Gift registries filled, turn to imagination.

Examples of unusual/inappropriate (yet thoughtful) gifts: single-serving, silver tea set; wine glasses for a couple who doesn't drink; steak-of-the-month club for vegetarians; espresso machine for someone who hates the smell of coffee.

An on-line magazine had a contest for people to e-mail in wedding gifts that they had received that they didn't know what to do with. Many of the responses were specialized kitchen products/small appliances that the recipient just didn't know how to use or even what they were.

No one knows what gift Jesus might have brought to the wedding at Cana, but could it have been as seemingly frivolous as the favor his mom asked of him? It wasn't really something that he was planning to do, but his mother brought the problem to him and stated the fact, "The wine had run out." "Woman, what time is that to us?" Jesus replied. "My time has not yet come." His mother is talking about the here and now and running out of wine, but Jesus is talking about whom he is and what will happen in the future. Besides, the disciples are already following him – does the occasion really call for him to perform a miracle? Surely the Son of Man had not come to get the guests liquored up.

But Jesus did save the host the embarrassment of running out of wine and maybe THAT was Jesus' wedding gift to the couple! A gift of joy and a good time for all. Guests who otherwise might have had nothing in common come together b/c of the host. A wedding celebration that is supposed to last up to 7 days can now continue. And, Jesus shares a sign of his identity – the first of many signs recorded in the gospel of John. This sign, turning water into wine, connects to the sour wine that Jesus will taste when he is hung on the cross – an event that he's possibly alluding to when he says "My time has not yet come." Plus, his mother is present at both events – the first of his many signs and his appearance on the cross.

Jesus brought a wonderful gift to the wedding at Cana. It wasn't something for the couple to take home and display on their mantle. It didn't need to last beyond the wedding day b/c it contributed to the memories of the day for those who were present and gave a glimpse of the true gift in Christ himself. Sometimes gifts do not have to be material things.

The Apostle Paul expands upon the idea of gifts in the book of 1st Corinthians. Spiritual gifts can't be handed to someone, but must be discovered in them. They come from God. They come through the Spirit of God. Spiritual gifts are revealed in the moments of our lives – in our relationships – like at a wedding -- gifts such as patience, humor, thrift, attentiveness, forgiveness. Paul describes other gifts in the 12th chapter of 1 Corinthians (wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracle working, prophecy, spirit discernment, tongues, interpretation of tongues)

– ones we often associate with church. And yet, they are just as important in relationships. Think of a couple coming together to create a budget, name a child, struggle w/addictions/depression, looking after aged parents, etc. These gifts can be revealed. Even Jesus himself revealed his gift at the wedding at Cana. Yet Paul reminds us that no one is expected to have ALL the gifts. We must come together to be truly blessed. Think of a congregation trying to find where God is at work in their community and to follow God's call for them to use their collective gifts to share Christ with others. Wherever two or more are gathered. . .

Isn't it remarkable that w/these gifts – some that may seem so ordinary – that the kingdom of God is built one household at a time? We're used to finding out that we are human, broken and dysfunctional in our relationships. And yet, there is another powerful dimension to our relationships. Through Jesus we are married into God's family. Through Jesus, our gifts can be given for God's sake.

At the wedding in Cana, Jesus revealed his own gifts as a bridegroom. Out of water – wine. The sign or miracle of turning water into wine pointed towards something else – something greater. He gave out of abundance. Out of a sense of duty – joy. A wedding is supposed to leave a surplus and there most likely was that day. And Jesus does leave a surplus for you – enough joy to last until the kingdom of God.

What will you do with the surplus of joy, the surplus of your gifts given to you by God? Will those gifts be a sign of God, pointing towards God's abundance?

Helpful Resources:

- Narrative Lectionary podcast
- *Living Beyond the Ordinary A Study of John* Jack Hayford, executive editor
- *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel* Craig R Koester
- *Crossmarks* online resource Brian P. Stoffregen