

GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH
Sheboygan, Wisconsin

The Second Sunday after the Epiphany of Our Lord (C)

Isaiah 62.1-5

Psalms 36.5-10

1 Cor. 12.1-11

John 2.1-11

The Gospel and other readings continue the Epiphany theme of the surprising revelation of God in the works of Jesus.

Isaiah 62.1-5

1. The relationship between God and His people, or between Christ and His Church, is often compared in the Bible to a marriage relationship.
 - a. Isaiah makes it clear that God delights in this relationship.
 - b. The prophet will not “keep silent” following many years of silence (Isa. 42.14).
2. This pronouncement is made on the Feast of Tabernacles (*Sukkoth*).
 - a. Zion’s “vindication” (cf. Isa. 61.2) breaks forth with the suddenness of a desert dawn.
 - i. The Sukkoth theme of light is employed:
 1. At Sukkoth, lights are kindled at “the place of drawing water”.
 2. All the city is light. There is not a courtyard in the city that is not light, and the light from the whole city may be seen in the desert.
3. The reference to a crown and diadem (v. 3) may refer to the ancient practice of a king’s crown being patterned to look like the city walls. (Cf. the medieval illuminations in the Duc du Berri’s *Tres Riches Heures*.)
 - a. The one to be crowned may be Zion herself, but the references to the one to be crowned being no longer “Forsaken” also harkens back to the references to the Suffering Servant.
 - i. “Forsaken” (*‘ăzûbâ*) is also found at 1 Kgs. 22.42, as a proper name (the mother of Johesephat).
 - ii. Similar uses of “My Delight is in Her” also appear (2 Kgs. 21.1), and for “Married” (espoused).
 1. These names are thus a play on Israelite history.
 2. The reference to Married indicates that Israel’s adultery (Hos. 2.18) is now forgotten.
 - b. The Church has always viewed such references to Israel and the Suffering Servant as prefigurative of Jesus.
4. Israel is restored into the full covenant with the LORD as a new bride.

Psalms 36.5-10

1. This psalm combines elements of a Wisdom psalm with a hymn to God.
 - a. The grandeur of God’s faithful love (*hesed*) is contrasted with the pettiness of human evil, using imagery of contrasting height and depth.
2. The knowledge of God’s love is described using imagery of a banquet.

3. The image of light is also used, echoing the theme of light (from *Sukkoth*) found in the lesson from Isaiah.

1 Corinthians 12.1-11

1. The beginning phrase (“Now concerning ...”) is a *peri de* phrase in Greek. This indicates that Paul is responding to a question raised by the Corinthian Christians. His response (which runs to 14.40) suggests that the Corinthian Christians have asked questions related to the hierarchy of spiritual gifts, and that Paul has discerned an egocentric competitiveness in Corinth that is detrimental to the Church.
2. The Corinthians had been “enticed and lead astray” to idols. At some stage ecstasy had “authenticated” the Corinthians’ pagan worship.
 - a. The phrase here translated as “lead astray” may be better translated as “carried along”.
3. In reminding the Corinthians of the formula “Jesus is Lord” (used in baptism), Paul is combating spiritual elitism. *All* confess that Jesus is Lord in their baptism.
4. Since all spiritual gifts have a common origin, they should serve a common purpose (vv. 4-7). Cf. the *Catechism* (BCP 852-855).
 - a. The Holy Spirit always acts to build up the Church, never to cause dissension and schism.
 - b. The Holy Spirit both gives and operates the gift. Thus, none should be puffed up with pride (v.11).
5. The list of gifts made here by Paul is not exhaustive. Compare 1 Cor. 12.27-30; Rom. 12.6-8; Eph. 4.11.
 - a. Throughout the history of the Church many charismatics have assumed particular meanings for the gifts listed here, but any meaning must be seen to be arbitrary.

John 2.1-11

1. The miracle at the wedding feast in Cana (turning the water into wine) is the first miracle recounted in John.
 - a. Chs. 1 to 12.50 of John comprise the “Book of Signs”:
 - i. The narrative of Jesus’ ministry will culminate in the rejection of Jesus by “his own.”
 - ii. John refers to “signs” (*semeia*) rather than miracles or works (as in the synoptic Gospels). These are manifestations of Jesus’ divinity to those among whom He ministers.
 - iii. The miracles are not demonstrations of Jesus’ power, but manifestations of His glory.
2. At this first miracle, Jesus’ divinity is manifested to His disciples.
 - a. In John, the disciples believe in response to the miracles.
 - b. This is one of the only two times in his Gospel that John refers to the Virgin Mary (who is never named in this Gospel). The second is when Jesus is on the cross.
 - c. The reference to wine likely echoes the imagery of the Messianic feast found in Isaiah (Isa. 54.4-8; 62.4-5).

- i. An abundance of wine is also a sign of the restoration of Israel or of the end times: Amos 9.13; Hosea 2.24; Joel 4.18; Isa. 29.17; Jer. 3.15.
3. The actual miracle is mentioned (v. 9) almost in passing, and never becomes a topic of public knowledge or discussion. It is known to the disciples.
4. Much of the story contains Palestinian Hebraisms that John (a Palestinian Jew) has translated into Greek.
 - a. *E.g.*, “Woman, *what concern is that to you and me?*” sounds, in English, almost disrespectful, but is not so in the original.
 - i. The Hebrew *mâ-lî-wālāk* connotes disinterest, or a reluctance to become involved.
 1. This must be read in conjunction with Jesus’ statement “My hour has not yet come.”
 2. Jesus’ “hour” in John is the crucifixion (*cf.* 12.27).
5. Jesus also appears reluctant to act at the second Cana miracle (4.47-50). This reminds the reader that no human agency, only the Father’s will, guides what Jesus does in His ministry.