



## **Isaiah 62:1-5; John 2:1-11**

### **Reverend Giuseppe Mattei (January 19, 2025)**

Isaiah 62 reports God's promise of vindication: After so much shaming and suffering, vindication sounds soothing, healthy and holy. God's promise of the reversal of suffering is a vital hope for all.

The imagery glitters with beauty and reminds one of royal power: "You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord, a royal diadem in the hand of your God." (v. 3)

Then, the long-shamed Israelites are promised a new batch of adjectives: once they were Forsaken and Desolate, now they are Delightful and Married. The heavenly spouse is ready to forgive, to embrace and to welcome back the unfaithful mate.

The theme of unrequited love is a constant divine complaint in prophetic literature.<sup>1</sup> Israel is accused of breaking God's covenantal love with the stain of unfaithfulness. Her attention is turned to other gods: she has forgotten God's favor and election and has blindly embraced false idols. Other "gods" divert our attention and lure us into possessive and dependent behavior: materialism, fame, pride, selfishness, ideologies, etc.

However, God's pursuit of a covenantal relationship reveals a profound and relentless love. Amidst Israel's infidelity, God's desire to restore and renew the bond remains unwavering.

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<sup>1</sup> Hosea 2:13; 3:1; Jeremiah 31:3; Isaiah 55

This divine determination underscores the essence of a covenant — a sacred agreement marked by steadfast love, mercy, and commitment. God’s covenantal love transcends human failings, continually inviting us back to a relationship defined by grace and redemption. The promise of renewal and transformation is ever-present, calling for a return to faithfulness and devotion.

The use of erotic language in the Bible is not a novel concept. Ancient texts frequently employed vivid, sensual imagery to convey the depth of divine love and human relationships. As such, these expressions are emblematic of an enduring divine pursuit, seeking to restore and renew the sacred covenant amidst human waywardness.<sup>2</sup>

I am not surprised that the Evangelist John used a wedding scene as the start of Jesus’ ministry. The setting reminds us of the biblical images of the messianic hope, marked by wine and abundance of fine foods.<sup>3</sup>

John tells us that turning water into wine at Cana was the first sign of Jesus’ glory. He, the Word made flesh, who was with God since the beginning and indeed was God,<sup>4</sup> has come to manifest what God had in mind all along: To live into a covenantal love with us.

This “covenantal love” is an ongoing project of unity Jesus prays for even in his final moments (“That they all may be one”)<sup>5</sup> and one that the “beloved community” tries to live up to.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> [Blessed Passion of Love: The Affections, the Church Fathers, and the Christian Life | Church Life Journal | University of Notre Dame](#)

<sup>3</sup> Hosea 2:19-20; Isaiah 25:6-8; Jeremiah 2:2

<sup>4</sup> John 1:1

<sup>5</sup> John 17:21-23

<sup>6</sup> [Topical Bible: The Beloved Community](#)

The story starts with a time reference: “On the third day...”

What preceded the “third day” was a preamble on the origins of Jesus and then an introduction to the ministry of John the Baptist by the River Jordan. Then, John the Evangelist starts counting days: On the first day, Jesus calls his first disciples to “come and see” where he lives, in other words, into a relationship with him. The discipleship scheme is in motion and brother calls brother and friend calls friend to follow Jesus. On the second day, Jesus calls Nathanael and promises him (and us) divine visions.

On the third day, Mary is at a friends’ house in Cana of Galilee for a wedding. Jesus and his disciples are also present. As the celebration goes on, the hosts run out of wine. This holds great potential for embarrassment and future shunning.

Mary notices this and brings it to Jesus’ attention. His comment is rather snarky: “Woman, what concern is that to me and to you? My hour has not yet come.” (v. 4) – he wants to know how this has become her and his business.

But Mary does not take offense at his rebuke. She trusts God unconditionally. She forces his hand, and without begging for forgiveness, she instructs the servants to “Do whatever he tells you.” (v. 5) He obliges, and a miracle is delivered.

But what is the miracle?

A policeman pulls a car and notices the driver is a priest. He asks him “Reverend, have you been drinking?” The bewildered reply came swiftly: “Just water, officer.” Policeman: “Then why do I smell wine?” Priest: “Good Lord! He’s done it again!”

In this joke, the miracle is that the priest hasn’t killed anyone with his irresponsible driving.

But in the wedding's story? Is it the water turned into delicious and abundant wine? Is it Mary's modeling of persistent trust in God? Is it Jesus' rethinking of his timing and not taking credit for the presence of the new wine demonstrating involvement with humility? Is it the continuation of merry and community?

Is a miracle something majestic that happens to us or something we participate in, like the obeying servants who execute Jesus' words indicate?

The words of the steward are revealing: "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."

God does not operate according to common expedient or expectation: If you thought the best in life is behind you, think again: God has marvelous things in store for the years left ahead and for life eternal when we shed our human form. We can participate with hope in the divine project of justice and not be disappointed. The sign at Cana points to greater signs ahead.

The "hour" of Jesus unfolds gradually across the gospel. It's an "hour" of violence through which Jesus must pass in order to fulfill the justice of God. At that "hour" the new family or beloved community initiated by Jesus is empowered to live the covenantal love desired by God.<sup>7</sup> We are called into that family with a commitment to prosperity for all regardless of color, gender, economic status, or religion.<sup>8</sup>

Listen again to the words of God: You are a jewel, "a royal diadem in the hand of your God." Shine without hesitation. Proclaim God's justice and rejoice in his peace. Amen.

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<sup>7</sup> John 19:25-27

<sup>8</sup> <https://sojo.net/articles/opinion/mlks-dream-trumps-nightmare>