

We the people hold the testimony of Jesus Christ – How then shall we live?

USA Declaration, The Balm of Gilead Poem, and other adaptations.

Friends,

This morning the book of Revelation insists humanity holds the testimony of Jesus Christ, a testimony so strong that often reveals God's glory and allows us to encounter Christ's presence and participate in that glory. The people hold this testimony, let us talk about it – **we the people.**

We the people hold this truth¹, that in the season of Epiphany God was revealed to us through Jesus Christ – the sign of the star shone all around the place in which he was born and the revelation from this sign was the creation of a new covenant, a new union between God and humanity that offers us life, light, and liberty!

We the people hold this truth, that in the season of Christian Unity, that the Church universal gifted for ALL people in the beauty of diversity is rooted in the love of Christ.² Here you should find a sense of belonging – belonging to a place, a community – where the Spirit of God, that rested upon Jesus now rests on humanity. That same Spirit that that turns the world upside down, so that the will of God can be done on earth as it is in heaven. This same Spirit that is within the church to seek good and to work for the good and welfare of others and personal growth through prayer and reflection. The people hold this truth as their way of life and everyday but particularly this week of Christian Unity we profess this faith together, rooted in the life giving, liberating light of the world.

We the people hold this truth, as the voice of a great multitude, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunder give you the testimony of Christ – for you see on the third day, there was a wedding that would last about 7 days, the disciples were there, Mary – the mother of Jesus – was there, invited guests were there: maids and servants – for the banquet and celebration of a union between two people. A joyous occasion celebrated with community. But this moment is hindered

¹ USA Declaration of Independence Adaptation

² Week of Christian Unity Resources 2021 - <https://ctbi.org.uk/resources-for-week-of-prayer-for-christian-unity-2021/>

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by a simple phrase, **'They have no wine'** After a troubling discussion with his mother and the telling of an hour that has not yet come... 'they have no wine!'

We the people hold this truth, that even as Christians – holding firm and fast to our beliefs – We have all been there. We run out of wine. Our life is empty, colourless, tasteless. Nothing is growing or fermenting in us. There is no vibrancy or bounciness to life. Or maybe we still have wine, but it is turned to vinegar, gone sour, and it no longer carries the joy that we once knew. Whatever the reason, **'there is no wine'**. I am not a wine connoisseur, but I am definitely not talking about chardonnay or some red wine. I am talking about the wine that is depicted through love, intimacy, and friendship; the wine of meaning, purpose, and direction; of strength, and health; the wine of belief, trust, and faith; the wine of mercy and forgiveness, the wine of peace, joy, and security; the wine of justice, dignity, and equality; the wine of hospitality, inclusion, and welcome; the wine of **justice, liberty, and peace**. But Mary declares **'They have no wine'**

HOWEVER, we the people hold this truth – that the Lord our God the Almighty reigns and God's glory is revealed in miraculous works. **Jesus said to them, "fill the jars with water"**. Turning water into wine is a popular story. I would not be able to stand here and tell you that this was done physically, or it is a literal meaning. But what I can say is that there is a miracle that we hold the truth to. That is not just about the water. This sign of Jesus turning water into wine is small. But the sign runs deeper than that. It's about calling forth life where there is none. It's about transformation. It's about living a new life. It's the shift from the darkness into the light, hope in the time of hopelessness, despair into joy. This truth is that in the presence of Christ when **we the people** run out of energy – there is a source of healing and restoration.³ This revelation is as important for us today in the middle of our lives and the world's crises as it was at the wedding in Cana. There is the despair and joy as it was in Cana.

³ Reflections on 'There is a Balm in Gilead', African American Poem.

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THEREFORE, We the people hold this truth – God’s glory and miraculous works are in the world today and this is shown through **LOVE** – Love that is rooted in God and our love for one another. This love that focuses us on the needs of others without losing ourselves because we offer our true selves, not an imitation of someone else. This love that does not hold on to toxic or abusive relationships but builds on empowering and raising up someone who was created in the image of God, deserving of and receiving love.⁴ So, just like the bride and bridegroom at the wedding we are not alone. There is a beloved community that we are part of rooted in Christ. Life can throw uncertainties at us, the future we cannot predict – the wine of our life runs out. Beloved, I have no answers to this, but I know this, we have a part to play in the transformative action of this miracle, **there is solace, a relief in Christ**. The possibility of a transformation was because of Christ. But Mary declared the need, the emptiness, “They have no wine.” The servants poured the water. The chief steward named the good wine, the new life. These are our parts to play...for ourselves and for each other, the world and communities to which we belong.

WE THE PEOPLE MAKE THIS DECLARATION - the miracle is that the hope and love of Christ is with us in our despair – calling together a community to participate in the miracle. We believe this truth to be self-evident in drawing us together to be rooted in Christ and rooted in the needs for one another. – This is our union through Christ. The question therefore for the people, is **How then shall we live?**

Amen.

⁴ Bishop Michael Curry, ‘Love is the Way’ p.95

Disclaimer: Many other poetic adaptations have been used to bring together the sermon.