

“God’s Infinite Love”

Psalm 36:5-10, John 2:1-11 & Isaiah 62:1-5

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Prayer for Understanding Ever present Lord, we thank you for your word, which is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. Holy Spirit open our eyes to the signs of your presence, open our ears to your voice, and open our minds to your wisdom. Amen.

What do you do when it seems like the energy, life, peace, love, and joy has run out?

I have become attuned to my body on backpacking trips. I can sense when I am running low on hydration or nutrients, so I drink and eat. I keep my desire for hiking fueled by noticing trees, creatures, and the changing details of the trail. I keep my soul dancing by venting to God, letting God help me carry my burdens, silently singing, sharing with God my gratitude, and delight in creation. And still there have been times when I have run out of determination to take another step. Once was a stifling hot day with a long slog up a steady incline. As I crested a mountain saddle, there was a lake fed by melting snow. I went for a cold invigorating, rejuvenating swim which replenished my joy in hiking. Another time was on the Appalachian trail in Pennsylvania in a section known as “the place where hiking shoes die”. There is not a trail, but rather blazes that guide you over boulder and rock fields. The pace is arduously slow. One is either picking a line hopping on boulders and occasionally enduring a painful slip or one’s joints are constantly being twisted by shifting, jagged, softball-sized rocks that puncture your skin when you fall. There is no place to camp. Nothing is soft. Exhausted, sore, and bleeding I emerged from this section onto a pine needle covered dirt path. It felt like walking on clouds. Slowly, the pain subsided, and energy returned.

The psalmist sings of the rejuvenating aspects of creation, living water, light, and God’s steadfast love. **Psalm 36:5-10 NLT “Your unfailing love, O Lord, is as vast as the heavens; your faithfulness reaches beyond the clouds. Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains, your justice like the ocean depths. You care for people and animals alike, O Lord. How precious is your unfailing love, O God! All humanity finds shelter in the shadow of your wings. You feed them from the abundance of your own house, letting them drink from your river of delights. For you are the fountain of life, the light by which we see. Pour out your unfailing love on those who love you; give justice to those with honest hearts.”**

Enjoy creation, serve, be grateful, receive grace, celebrate, create goodness, relax, make peace, rejoice, nurture community, and love, and still there will be times when you feel totally spent. Jesus’ first miracle is providing humanity with abundance for everything that is running out in our life. A reading from the gospel of John: **John 2:1-11 NRSV “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, “Dear woman, what concern is that to me and to you? My hour has not yet come.” Jesus’ mother said to the servants, “Do whatever Jesus 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. Jesus said to them, “Now draw some out, and take it to the person in charge of the banquet.” So they took it. When the person in charge tasted the water that had become wine and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), that person 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 God’s glory, and his disciples believed in Jesus.”**

This account begins on the third day. The first day Jesus was betrayed, beaten, mocked, crucified, abandoned, died, and was buried. The second day Jesus experienced hell, isolation from people, separation of soul from body, and perceived abandonment by God. On the second day, everything is poured out, lost, gone, finished. On the third day, there is resurrection, eternal life, reunion of soul with one’s infinite, spacious, soaring, glorious, resurrection body, loving harmony with all people, and the joy of complete love constantly flowing between Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer. On the third day, everything is overflowing, found, present, and expanding.

John places us at a wedding. It is a story of celebration; of Jesus coming to make our joy complete; of God loving a good party; of family, friends, and love. It is a story about how God celebrates all that is good about the cosmos and human life, about a desire for laughter, fun, and a zest for life. It is story of how Jesus is there for everyone, even an unknown couple, in a small out of the way village, who underestimated the wine order. No deficiency is too small for God to notice and fulfill. And this story is a microcosm of life. The question that we are left to ponder is: “What do we do when the wine runs out?” Because the wine runs out more often than we expect. Wine

can run out in marriages and in jobs, in friendships, and in parenting. Wine can run out in finances and the church, progress on a worthy cause and dreams. This story is about much more than wine. It is about when the demands of life overwhelm our resources; when we are no longer equipped in the ways that we hoped. It is about when we are unable to be who we long to be.

When the energy, life, peace, love and joy run out. When the wine runs out. Mary, speaks to Jesus, lamenting that the demands are not met by the resources, that they are falling short. Mary tells the servants do whatever Jesus tells you. Mary does not know how Jesus will supply the need. Mary does not know how Jesus will partner with servants in fulfilling every need. Mary does not know when Jesus will act. The critical issue is who. God will fulfill our needs. Jesus turns water into wine. When they taste the wine, they are amazed because it is the finest of all wines. God will fulfill all our needs with goodness beyond our grandest imagination. Wherever there is a lack of anything God will provide infinite abundance. At the heart of this story is a parent who believes in their child and servants who are willing to follow God's commands even when they do not understand. Jesus took a family's shameful deficiency and transformed it into overflowing abundance! So, if you feel you are running on empty, if there is an aspect of your life that you feel that you do not have enough resources, if there is a need you perceive in the world that desperately needs to be satisfied, if there is anything that is running dry, then this miracle is for you. This first miracle in the Gospel of John is about the good news that God meets each of us where we are at and will supply all we need and much more and it will be far more glorious than we can fathom. Jesus is taking on all that diminishes life and redeeming it so all will enhance life. Jesus' first miracle is to facilitate joy, giddiness, singing, playfulness, and to get everyone on the dance floor for the chicken dance. The hundreds of gallons of joy is a sneak peak of all the glory that is coming. God is always with us. God loves us. God will meet all our needs. God will make our joy complete, our joy overflowing, and our joy expanding forever. So let us proclaim it and let us live it.

Poetry, metaphor, songs, similes help us begin to comprehend the infinite enormity of God's blessings and love that never runs out for us. The prophet Isaiah explains that we are like a bride and God is like the groom in first person God words. Listen to God's love for you and all people. Listen to God's delight in helping each of us shine in glorious splendor. **Isaiah 62:1-5 NLT "I love Zion, I will not keep still. My heart yearns for Jerusalem, I cannot remain silent. I will not stop praying for her until her righteousness shines like the dawn, and her salvation blazes like a burning torch. The nations will see your righteousness. World leaders will be blinded by your glory. And you will be given a new name by the Lord's own mouth. The Lord will hold you in God's hand for all to see, a splendid crown in the hand of God. Never again will you be called "Forsaken" or "Desolate". Your new name will be "My delight is in you" and "The Bride of God," for the Lord delights in you and will claim you as God's bride. Your children will commit themselves to you, O Jerusalem, just as a young man commits himself to his bride. Then God will rejoice over you as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride."**

Songs are art that have many insights. One view of OneRepublic's song "Love Runs Out" is a husband declaring his tenacious, enduring, eternal love for his wife. Imagine Jesus singing this song to you. Contrary to the lyric, "til the love runs out" implied in the song is that the love will never run out because of the resilience, perseverance, determination, commitment, and tenacity of the lover. God's love is forever. Imagine Jesus singing these lyrics to you: "I'll be your light, your match, your burning sun. I'll be the bright in black that's making you run. And we'll feel alright. Cause we'll work it out. I'll be your ghost, your game, your stadium. I'll be your 50 thousand clapping like one. I got my mind made up. I can't let go. The love will never run out."

There is a section of this song that describes a spiritual battle that ultimately is decided by God's love experienced through prayer and music. Neither darkness, demons, nor anything will deter God from caring for us, God's beloved.

The lyric "50 thousand clapping like one for you" joins with the insistent drums and pounding piano line. Scripture tells of the great cloud of witnesses that cheer us on. Savor the image of God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and all of heaven clapping for you, cheering for you, singing for you, and loving you.

Song writer Ryan Tedder explained another facet that he hopes the song conveys. Humans make plans, and those plans need dreams. The quickest way to kill a dream is to give up. Tedder's life and career have been one giant lesson in determination. God is the source of determination.

God provides infinite energy, life, peace, joy and love for you and all people. Amen