

Emmaus Road Mennonite Fellowship  
January 17, 2010  
Anita Rediger

### “Why Do You Involve Me?”

In the early years of our marriage we often had Swiss visitors. Some of our visitors were tourists acquainted with the Rediger family, simply dropping in as they traveled cross-country. Others were young men who wanted the opportunity to spend time on an American farm. Some of these young men had also been "encouraged" to get away from home for awhile and to live and work with someone else! One of these young men was Rolf. Rolf was a sturdy young man who had a big appetite. As we came to the end of the mealtime, Rolf would ask each one of us if we wanted anymore of the food which remained on the serving dishes... As soon as we said, "No thank you" he would quickly take all which remained and devour it. Sometimes he even had to unfasten his belt to make room for it! Dessert was the same way...there weren't ever any cookies remaining...they all went into Rolf's pockets. Frankly, I had never seen anything like it!

As we learned to know Rolf, we also came to better understand some of his seemingly uncouth habits. Rolf had come to us as a young farm hand from an acquaintance's Swiss "Bauernhof." Like many Swiss farm workers, he had also lived on the farm. Rolf had come to this farm family from a children's home. He had grown up in a setting with many other children. He had learned early on to be sure to eat quickly, while at the same time, grabbing as much for the pockets as possible! Rolf had experienced something that neither Martin nor I had ever experienced: that of needing to compete for food. Now, at our table, even when Rolf didn't need to gobble up his meal or hoard food, the memory of those early years guided his behavior.

Even for those of us who have never experienced “want,” the thought of scarcity greatly influences our behavior. Think about the age-old marketing tricks of “for a limited time only” or “while supplies last!” When we host a meal or a party, we’re motivated to plan carefully because we certainly don’t want to feel the embarrassment of “running out!” On the day of our oldest son’s graduation from high school, I felt compelled to stop by the grocery and buy one more graduation cake...I just wasn’t sure that I had ordered enough cake! (We had cake for many days to come!!) Anxiety at the thought of “running out” had prompted such action!

So this morning, as we think about the shortage of wine at the wedding of Cana in Galilee, let’s enter the setting and imagine what this moment felt like? ...For me it evokes, one of those, “bad dream” moments – and it was one of those time when it was even uncomfortable to be a guest. Mary must have been watching what was happening behind the scenes. She must have seen some of the furtive glances shared between servers. She must have been aware of a growing unease among those who were going to

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have to find a way to make the best of this really shameful situation. A wedding was no time to have the wine run out!

It was only the third day...there were days of celebration yet to come! So...now what??? We hold our breath as we hear these words, “When the wine gave out, Mary leaned over and said to Jesus, ‘They have no wine.’” Mary was simply telling it like it was- for whatever reason- there wasn’t enough wine. It had run out and very soon everyone was going to know it. With Mary, we hold our breath: this is a dreaded moment of embarrassment, a moment of desperation, a moment of helplessness, a moment of fear, of “now what???” for there is not enough!

This isn’t the first time that folks have found themselves in such a quandary. Let’s listen to two other stories, two ancient stories of want, of scarcity, of desperation, of hopelessness and shame...

- 1 Kings 17:8 Retelling of Elijah and the widow of Zarephath...
- 2 Kings 4: 1 Retelling of Elisha and the widow from the company of prophets... another story of scarcity, of desperation, of hopelessness...and shame

Now, back to our NT account. Isn’t it fascinating how familiar it now sounds??

Mary’s observation of the present state of things prompts her to turn to Jesus. I hear her words mixed with a sense of anxiety, urgency, yet with a hint of prophetic possibility. She says – grimacing – “They have no wine.” She says – with a spirit of imagination – “They have no wine.” Jesus’ reply, “Woman, what concern is that to you and me?” (The NIV translates Jesus’ question, “Why do you involve me?”)

Mary, does not give Jesus any suggestions, but simply turns to the servants and invites them to do as Jesus says. The servants drew water and it became wine. The widow of Zarephath baked bread – day after day – from the meal that remained in her little jar and from the oil which remained in her little jug. The prophet’s indebted widow filled jar after jar with oil from the little which had been found in hers. The holy men in each story had very simple ideas; the ordinary folks in each story stepped out in extraordinary faith! I find myself marveling at the risk-taking faith of the persons in each one of these stories – the widow of Zarephath – **first** made a meal for Elijah before discovering that there would be enough for her son and herself. The newly bereaved wife of the prophet boldly went to all the neighbors to ask for extra containers - **before** she had evidence of any oil to pour into them...the servants at the wedding of Cana carried a lot of water **before** any of it turned into wine!

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Let's move beyond the day of the wedding in Cana of Galilee. This story was told and retold and then collected as part of the written Gospel of John. The people who heard the story of Jesus changing water into wine would have also been well acquainted with these stories from the OT. Elijah, Elisha, now Jesus...each one standing in the prophetic tradition. Each one bringing promise of abundance instead of scarcity, of an action plan healing, and hope - instead of desperation; imagination instead of helplessness and creative ideas instead of fear...

The Gospel of John notes that Jesus' action at the wedding in Cana of Galilee was "the first of his signs...and his disciples believed in him. What was it that his disciples believed? Did they believe that they wouldn't have to be responsible to bring anything to drink with lunch anymore? *No, the changing of the water into wine isn't the story.* The story is that - together with the prophetic, imaginative, participation of God, people like our three widows...and folks behind the scenes like the servants - bring in the Kingdom. The story is that when ordinary folks are involved with the way of Jesus, the Kingdom comes.

John 20:30, "Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God and that through believing you may have life in his name."

When Mary turned to Jesus with the observation about the dreges of wine already being poured out, he asked her, "Why do you involve me?" Questions for us: First, do we involve Jesus in the challenges of daily life? And if we do...why...and how!!

I believe that "involving Jesus" means:

1. **Naming reality**...yes... we face endless situations which seem hopeless and shameful, embarrassing and desperate. In our own very personal lives we know that the "well can run dry." There are seasons in our lives where it seems that all that lies ahead is a "dead end." As we think of the circumstances of our fellow humanity in Haiti, we cannot deny that dreaded situations can arise. For what ever reason, for a whole host of reasons, suffering is part of our human condition. Back to the story of the wedding...what if Mary hadn't "spoken up?" What if she had only raised her eyebrows and shaken her head about the poor state of affairs? Mary saw a need and she thought of Jesus. Mary saw and need and she began to envision new possibilities.
2. **Watching for signs of the kingdom**... watching for signs means being engaged in life and encouraging one another to see unexpected openings in what the world around us would label as "hopeless causes." "Involving Jesus" means that we

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watch together - tending the Light of Christ instead of feeding the darkness.

“Involving Jesus” means recognizing that we need each persons leadings and gifts.

3. **Participating in creative, imaginative acts.** Believing in the way of Jesus... when we're asked to use what looks to us to be our last cup of meal & oil... believing in the way of Jesus when we're asked to go “foolishly” to our neighbors and ask for containers to hold the overflowing abundance of God? Believing in the way of Jesus when he invites us to draw water- gallons and gallons of it so that it can be transformed into wine – the sign of the arrival of God's new age...and with abundance! Amos 9:13 & Joel 3: 18 “In that day the mountains shall drip sweet wine...” (image of salvation and restoration)

Just like Rolf, we've been conditioned to fear scarcity, to hunker down and to hoard what we've accumulated. Our culture has inoculated us with the fear that there won't be enough... We're conditioned to push and shove to get to the front of the line. Ironically, it's when we hoard and stockpile that we actually contribute to the conditions which lead to scarcity!

In contrast, we seek to be a resurrection people, folks for whom a different reality guides – we are folks who have seen Jesus feed 5000 people with five loaves and two fishes. (Loaves and fishes given by a child; loaves and fishes distributed by the hands of the disciples!) We, too, have seen Jesus in the breaking of the bread...and that has changed everything!

As believers...let's encourage one another to more fully “involve Jesus” in our lives, not demanding or prescribing what God must/should do; not simply “leaving it up to the Lord.”

Rather let's participate in the way of the Kingdom – **in truth-telling, by listening and watching for the creative, surprising promptings of the Spirit, and by stepping out in faith – And...in spite of what appears to be reality, discovering newness of life and abundance all around!**

**When we get involved with the way of Jesus transformation happens!**

**AMEN**

*Story of Hugo & Gertrude Beitler – wine making ??*