

January 20, 2019 – Sanctuary & Journey worship services**TEXT:** [John 2:1-11](#)**TITLE:** **Transforming the Ordinary***By the Rev. Patrice Fowler-Searcy*

December 1, 1955, started out much like any other ordinary day. Rosa Parks entered the bus for her ride home, and sat down in the colored section. When the white section of the bus filled up, the bus driver instructed Rosa to move from her seat to accommodate a white rider. Rosa refused. In her book, “Rosa Parks: My Story,” she stated, “People always say that I didn’t give up my seat because I was tired, but that isn’t true. I was not tired physically, or no more tired than I usually was at the end of a working day. I was not old, although some people have an image of me as being old then. I was 42. No, the only tired I was, was tired of giving in.”

Rosa’s refusal that day was not the first bus boycott to occur. Bayard Rustin (1942), Irene Morgan (1946), Sarah Louise Keys (1952), Aurelia Browder, Claudette Colvin, Susie McDonald and Mary Louise Smith were all arrested in Montgomery for refusing to give up their bus seats before Parks’ protest. However, Rosa was also the secretary of the Montgomery chapter of the NAACP and she was the perfect person to be the face of the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Her refusal to give up her seat that day was the spark that ignited the effort to end segregation and promote equal citizenship rights for Blacks in America.

April 4, 1968, around 6:00 in the evening, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.—surrounded by others who were with him—stepped onto the balcony outside his room at the Lorraine Hotel in Memphis, Tennessee. This was an ordinary evening and they were heading to dinner. I imagine Dr. King spent the majority of that day resting, because despite the fact that he was not feeling well the night before, he delivered a powerhouse message that would become iconic and prophetic. On that ordinary evening, a gun shot rang out, striking Dr. King in his jaw and severing his spinal cord. He was dead on arrival at the hospital, all of 39 years old.

Dr. King’s assassination was the spark that ignited violent protests and riots across the country—people were not only protesting the death of Dr. King, but also expressing frustration that the land of the free and the home of the brave, was anything but for Black people.

Jesus, his disciples, his mother and others were attending a wedding celebration in Cana of Galilee. Much like today, weddings then were great celebrations. However, unlike today, where there might be an invitation list for the wedding ceremony, another list of invites for the informal reception and a third guest list for the sit down dinner; it was the ordinary custom for the entire community to attend. Therefore, it was not an anomaly for Jesus, his disciples and his mother to be there. At the wedding reception, there would be eating, drinking and merriment and the celebration would typically last an entire week. We really don’t know whether Jesus or Mary were related to anyone in the bridal party or they just heard that the wedding was taking place and pitched up or if

Nathaniel, one of Jesus' early disciples who lived in Cana, invited them to attend. All we know is they were there, and the wine had run out.

When the wine runs out at a party in our day and age, the party is over. But at the wedding in Cana, the wine being completely depleted would have been an embarrassment for the hosts and more than likely would have been all that everyone remembered about the wedding. Jesus' mother takes note that the wine was completely consumed and shared this news with Jesus. He asks his mother, "What does that have to do with us?" And then Jesus tells his mother, "My time has not come." Yet, the next thing Jesus does denotes that he was fully aware of what his mother was asking him, do something about it.

Despite Jesus' seeming protestation, Mary tells the servants: "Do whatever he tells you." And without any further discussion with his mother, Jesus instructs the servants to fill the six stone pots with water, "fill them to the brim." Jesus took pots ordinarily used for purification, and turned them into vessels that would light the spark inaugurating his earthly ministry and recognition by his disciples of his divine glory. Jesus took ordinary water, contained in stone pots used for ritual cleansing and made extraordinary wine. The chief steward attested to the wine's superiority over the previously served wine. And lest we forget the amount of water that was turned to wine, it was an extravagantly abundant amount—120–180 gallons!

The Gospel of John counts this as the first or beginning of Jesus' signs, revealing his glory and ushering in a new era. An era of God's gracious, superabundant, mercy; an era of God incarnate showing up in ordinary places, using ordinary things and doing the extraordinary—turning purification pots into new wine skins, transforming water into wine; and if we continue to read the next few verses in the second chapter of John, Jesus turns over tables in the temple upsetting the ordinary religious order of the day.

Frederick, and Harriette, John Lewis, and Shirley Chisholm, Bayard Rustin and Angela Davis, Malala and Desmond, Harvey Adams, Sr. and Mary Lou Hammer, and far too many others to name have upset and continue to disturb the accepted order of the day as it relates to racism, inequality, sexism, injustice and all the other isms that exist by showing up in ordinary places and doing extraordinary things through the strength and by the grace of God. With God nothing is impossible; power is perfected in weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9); little becomes much, and God transforms ordinary situations and circumstances into extraordinary superabundance.

Rosa was tired of being tired that ordinary December day on the bus. Martin stepped out for an ordinary meal that April evening. Sybrina Fulton, the mother of Trayvon Martin, has turned the tragedy of her son's death, something that has become all too ordinary, the killing of an unarmed Black youth, into a movement to support others who have suffered the same loss as a result of gun violence and to fight for sensible gun laws and prosecutions of murderers. Dr. Johnnie Monroe, Lenore Williams, Pastor Heather and others in the Pittsburgh Presbytery are providing guidance and leadership for the ministry of Freedom Rising, working to address the plight of Black males in

Pittsburgh and five other cities. And so many others often unnamed and unknown, are using their ordinary lives and ordinary situations to move mountains and to lead movements that change and transform individuals, communities, nations and the world.

One that ordinary day, at a wedding in Cana, only a few people, the disciples, Jesus' mother and the servants were fully aware of what Jesus had done, and yet this act sparked a movement, a movement where there were is no longer Greek or Jew, no longer slave or free, no longer male and female, but where all are welcome, equal and to be treated as siblings in Christ, just as the entire village was welcome to attend the wedding in Cana. An ordinary occurrence ushered in the manifestation and recognition of Jesus' glory and belief by his disciples and probably a few others who were in the crowd, those ordinarily considered the least of these, a woman, Jesus' mother and the servants were aware too.

Beloved, Jesus knew that for which he had come and despite protesting that his time was not at hand, he revealed his glory by transforming water into wine and by giving his life that we might have life and life in abundance. But be warned that life in Jesus Christ is to live a life within a life. Nothing is changed and yet everything changes. Nothing has taken on a new form and yet everything is transformed. Stone jars used to store water for purification, become the vessels which holds new wine and a new way. Word becomes flesh; and an hour that has not yet come is here. What will be is, and what seems to be is no more. Ordinary occurrences usher in change—refusing to leave a seat on a bus, stepping out for dinner on a spring night, standing up for the disenfranchised, marching for equal rights for everyone, protesting the erection of walls and barriers and speaking up and demanding justice, and equality all have extraordinary consequences and can change the world.

As we celebrate the life and legacy of Dr. King, a man who didn't think he was prepared or maybe even called for such a time as this, but who by saying yes to God led a movement that is still relevant, needed and reverberates to this very moment, may we be encouraged that in our weakness and feebleness God is our strength; may we realize that God has endowed each of us with gifts and talents for the mutual benefit of all; and even when our faith is the size of a mustard seed, God can and will move mountains. Just as Jesus changed ordinary water to extraordinary wine, may we do ordinary things and watch God do the extraordinary.

Amen.