Devotional Reflection, Friday, August 7, 2026
Proper 13, the week of the tenth Sunday after Pentecost
The Rev. David W. Perkins, Th.D.

Realizing Impossible Possibilities

Key phrases for reflection from today's reading:
9When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom 10and 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.' 11Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

You will find the full text of today's Gospel at the end of this reflection.

Daily Office Lectionary Readings (*BCP*, 979)
AM Psalm 88; PM Psalm 91, 92
Judges 9:1-16,19-21; Acts 4:13-31; John 2:2-12

Today we celebrate the Feast of Catherine Winkworth. (See below.)

David's Reflections

In an article written about Genesis 18, Wallace Alston calls on us "to stand in awe and gratitude before God's steadfast love, which is always beforehand with us, anticipates our need, refuses to give up on us, and promises us a future filled with impossibilities that are absolutely too good to be false." * Those impossibilities that are too good to be false find symbolic expression in today's Gospel.

The host of the wedding in today's reading was caught in a situational trap; his supply of wine for the wedding had proven inadequate. Can you imagine the embarrassment if your family was hosting a wedding and the celebration afterwards and you ran out of provisions during the reception?

Jesus' action of transforming water into the finest wine has its place in John's dance of signs and symbols. The water pots usually were used for water for purifying utensils and food and for the ritual washing of the hands. There are six of them, one

short of seven, the number for perfection in Jewish numerical poetry. In short, the symbol system speaks of the purifying and cleansing that removes sin and its impurity. That cleansing could not be effected by the old rituals of Jesus' religious tradition. In the words of John the Baptist from the previous chapter in this Gospel, Jesus, the Lamb of God, would effect that cleansing by taking away the sin of the world.

Think of the implications of this miracle story for our experience of God. The God who comes to us in Jesus Christ showers abundance upon us. Even our situational traps do not close us off to new futures filled with impossible possibilities. Just when we have supposed that our needs are beyond anyone's caring and that our challenges are beyond addressing, the God of impossible possibilities transforms our water pots of water into the finest wine.

Congregations get a reminder here as well as individuals. We can get caught in the situational trap of listing our congregational "needs," thinking in terms of limited resources and limited possibilities, what asset mapping refers to as zero sum or closed sum thinking. Better to look at our assets and to consider what we thought were needs as opportunities and assets instead. That would be open sum thinking – to regard the world as teeming with the abundance of the mercy of God.

So, today, where are our water pots? Where are our situational traps? Where are we thinking in terms of needs and problems too profound for resolution? Jesus is in attendance. The abundance of the love and life of God lurks just beneath the surface of our experience. Will there be wine? And will there be wine enough? What do you think?

Recall Alston's words, ". . . stand in awe and gratitude before God's steadfast love, which is always beforehand with us, anticipates our need, refuses to give up on us, and promises us a future filled with impossibilities that are absolutely too good to be false." *

* Wallace M. Alston, Jr. "Genesis 18:1-11." *Interpretation* 42 (Oct 88):402.

Collect of the Day, Proper 13. The tenth Sunday after Pentecost
Let your continual mercy, O Lord, cleanse and defend your Church; and, because it cannot continue in safety without your help, protect and govern it always by your goodness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen. (BCP, 232)

Today we celebrate the Feast of Catherine Winkworth, poet, translator, and hymn writer (died 1 July 1878 CE).
http://satucket.com/lectionary/Catherine_Winkworth.htm

Collect of the Feast of Catherine Winkworth
Comfort your people, O God of peace, and prepare a way for us in the desert, that, like your poet and translator Catherine Winkworth, we may preserve the spiritual treasures of your saints of former years and sing our thanks to you with hearts and hands and voices, eternal triune God whom earth and heaven adore; for you live and reign for ever and ever. *Amen.*

A Collect for Fridays
Lord Jesus Christ, by your death you took away the sting of death: Grant to us your servants so to follow in faith where you have led the way, that we may at length fall asleep peacefully in you and wake up in your likeness; for your tender mercies' sake. *Amen*. (BCP, 123)

For those in the Armed Forces of our Country
Almighty God, we commend to your gracious care and keeping all the men and women of our armed forces at home and abroad. Defend them day by day with your heavenly grace; strengthen them in their trials and temptations; give them courage to face the perils which beset them; and grant them a sense of your abiding presence wherever they may be; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.* (BCP, 823)

In the Order of Worship for Evening
Blessed are you, O Lord, the God of our fathers, creator of the changes of day and night, giving rest to the weary, renewing the strength of those who are spent, bestowing upon us occasions of song in the evening. As you have protected us in the day that is past, so be with us in the coming night; keep us from every sin, every evil, and every fear; for you are our light and salvation, and the strength of our life. To you be glory for endless ages. *Amen*. (BCP, 113)

A Collect for Mission
Merciful God, creator of all the peoples of the earth and lover of souls: Have compassion on all who do not know you as you are revealed in your Son Jesus Christ; let your Gospel be preached with grace and power to those who have not heard it; turn the hearts of those who resist it; and bring home to your fold those who have gone astray; that there may be one flock under one shepherd, Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen*. (BCP, 280)

Daily Office Gospel, John 2:2-12
2Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. 3When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, 'They have no wine.' 4And Jesus said to her, 'Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.' 5His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.' 6Now standing there were six stone water-jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. 7Jesus said to them, 'Fill the jars with water.' And they filled them up to the brim. 8He said to them, 'Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.' So they took it. 9When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom 10and 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.' 11Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

12 After this he went down to Capernaum with his mother, his brothers, and his disciples; and they remained there for a few days.

Daily Offices in the Book of Common Prayer
Morning Prayer, Rite 2, page 75, *The Book of Common Prayer*
Noonday Prayer, page 103, *Book of Common Prayer*
Order of Worship for Evening (Vespers), p 109, *Book of Common Prayer*
Evening Prayer, Rite 2, page 115, *Book of Common Prayer*
Compline (Night Prayer), page 127, *Book of Common Prayer*
Daily Devotionals, page 136, *Book of Common Prayer*