

January 17, 2010

Epiphany 2

"The Best Wine Ever Tasted"

JOHN 2:1-11

On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, ² and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. ³ When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine." ⁴ "Dear woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My time has not yet come." ⁵ His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." ⁶ Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons. ⁷ Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim. ⁸ Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." They did so, ⁹ and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside ¹⁰ and said, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now." ¹¹ This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.

Have you ever heard of a sommelier? A sommelier is a person who tastes wine, pares it with food and serves it at very exclusive and high end restaurants. I heard of a young man from India living in the Bay area whose wine tasting skills are legendary. His palate is so refined that he can tell just from smelling and tasting where the wine is from and what year it is without even looking at the label. He smells and tastes but hardly ever swallows and doesn't even like drinking anything with alcohol. Imagine how this person would respond if he had an opportunity to taste the water that Jesus had turned into wine. See him smelling and swirling, smelling and swirling, and then smiling and saying, "Where did this wine come from? It is the best I have ever tasted?"

How interesting that Jesus chose to show us how much he cares about us and how he is able to help us with all problems by turning water into wine at a wedding celebration in Cana of Galilee. You see, dear Christian, your Lord Jesus who was concerned about a wedding in Cana is even more concerned about everything happening in your marriage, and your family and your personal life. If he helped a family when they ran out of wine, how much more he is he not waiting to help you with your daily problems facing you in your home this coming week or coming year.

What are the three biggest problems facing you right now in your life? Think about them for a moment. At the top of your list and mine is our daily struggle with sin that separates us from our God. You have a friend in Jesus. "What a friend we have in Jesus, All our sins and grief's to bear. What a privilege to carry, Everything to God in prayer." Break out the best glasses and the crystal decanter. Let the bouquet fill the room as we taste and see how good Jesus is to people like us who don't even deserve his goodness and his kindness

Jesus saw the need

“On the third day a wedding took place in Cana of Galilee. Jesus’ mother was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding.” Jesus and his newly recruited disciples received an invitation to come to the wedding in Cana of Galilee. Why did people want Jesus to be there at their wedding? They wanted him there because he was the kindest, most loving and caring person they had ever met. Those are the kind of people you want around you not just at your wedding but in your home and at school and at your job. People like this bless you with their presence. It wouldn’t be long before these people came to know this very nice person as their Lord and God and Savior. Later on the Pharisees, the religious fanatics, would attack Jesus for enjoying himself at weddings and at meals in the homes of people. They would accuse him of being a drunkard and a glutton because they did not understand his kindness and love and reason for coming to this earth to rescue us and help us.

Jesus’ mother was also there. It was Mary who learned from her son Jesus to have the same compassion and love for people that Jesus had. She saw how stressed out the family was because they ran out of wine to serve the guests. Have you ever been to a wedding where someone totally wiggled out because they ran out of food or the groom became drunk or the bride and groom embarrassed everyone by throwing cake at each other, or the best man’s toast made you want to crawl under the table? We laugh at wedding bloopers, but everyone knows the stress that weddings can cause, especially if something goes wrong. Mary shares her concern with Jesus. “They have no more wine.”

How does Jesus handle this problem? He says to his mother, “Dear woman, why do you involve me? My time has not yet come.” This is not a put down to his dear mother, but a gentle reminder that he has things in his hands and under his control. He knows the best time and the best way to help families with their problems and troubles.

This past week, in our Thursday morning Bible Study, we were reading portions of Psalm 119. We came across the word “precept.” The original Hebrew word has the thought of a looking over something and controlling it. The Lord your God knows the best time for everything. I am going to start a verse and want you to finish it with me. “There is a season, a time for everypurpose under heaven.” With the psalmist we confess, “My times are in your hands, O Lord.” Jesus knew the best time and best way to help this family with their problems.

Notice how Mary responds to Jesus’ words. She tells the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.” Did you hear what Mary said? She used the “W” word. Today this word “whatever” often has a negative tone to it with the meaning, “I don’t care. I am not interested. It doesn’t matter what you think or do. Whatever floats your boat!” Mary used this word in a good way to show her trust that Jesus would do the right thing at the right time. Do whatever he tells you. A mother says to her daughter, “Whatever happens, I will always love you.” Today in child like faith and trust we say to Jesus, “Help me in whatever way you think is best.”

Does Jesus care about the families in Haiti who have just experienced a devastating earthquake, lost loved ones and homes, and can’t find enough water to drink? Yes, he

is. Is he concerned about families here in Santa Maria where Mom and Dad are always fighting, and the kids are going to school without ever reading the Bible or saying their prayers? Sure, he is. Is he concerned about families where gang members have more say and control than what Mom or Dad have to say? Sure, he is. Is he concerned about your heart aches and troubles, your battle with sin in your life, your lack of trust and confidence that everything is in his loving hands? Is he concerned about lustful and greedy and angry thoughts in your heart that lead to sinful thoughts and actions? Sure he is!

A mother with two kids at her side stood in line to check out a book in the library. The librarian said, "You cannot check this book out, because it is a reference book." The mother replied somewhat sadly, "Then I'll have to have my husband come down to use this book. You see he lost his job that he had for 15 years, and he needs this book to help him write a resume." Does Jesus care about this mother as she chokes back the tears because they cannot make their house payments? Sure he is. "No body knows the trouble I've seen. No body knows but Jesus."

Are you ready to taste some really good wine? Cleanse the palate. Break out the crystal. Let no one dare to taste this wine in Styrofoam cup.

Jesus fills the need

You can see how much Jesus cares by the way he fills the need. He tells the servants to fill the stone water pots that were used for washing. "Fill the jars with water." It says they filled them to the brim. These 30 gallon jars were not made of plastic or metal or even clay. They are stone jars, permanently put in place for Jewish people to do their ceremonial washing and cleansing. Some of this was required by OT law, but then the rabbis added countless other rules for ritual washings and cleansings. There was no joy in the religion of the Jews that used these stone water pots. Wash for this. Wash for that, forever washing to be ceremonially clean. Jesus said, "When they come from the marketplace they do not eat unless they wash. And they observe many other traditions, such as the washing of cups, pitchers and kettles.) Watch now! The water used for a false religion is going to be replaced by Jesus with the wine of gladness.

The servants do what Jesus told them to do. I don't know if they used buckets to bring the water from a nearby cistern, or if they transferred water from other storage containers, or if they had to make a trip to the local well that supplied water from the community. They fill the stone jars with water, 180 gallons of water. They fill them to the brim just as Jesus had asked them to do.

Jesus said, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." Even though their hearts must have been pounding with excitement to see this transformation, they do not tell the master of the banquet where the wine came from. This is a blind tasting. One sip, two sips, three sips, swirl it in the mouth, breathe in the bouquet. Here is sampling of the best wine he has ever tasted, the best wine that has ever touched human lips. When Jesus performs a miracle he never does anything half way. The lame leap, the blind see, the deaf hear and speak, and the stormy sea is immediately quiet and still. The master of the banquet wants to know why the best wine was saved for the last. Usually the best is served first, at the beginning of the celebration. Imagine his excitement when he was led

to the stone water jars, filled to the brim, with 180 gallons of the best wine in the world. Remember the wedding in Cana of Galilee? That's where they had that good wine that Jesus provided from water in the stone pots.

"This, is the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him." You are sitting here this morning, the blessed recipients of all the miracles that Jesus performed for you, just for you. Just as there was a moment and time in history, the perfect hour and perfect time, to change water into wine, there was the perfect time for Jesus to take every sin we have committed upon himself and miraculously be punished in our place, and miraculously rise from the dead. Look at the water in the stone water pots and think of the miracle when you were washed with water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. That miracle means as much for you today as when it first happened. Shortly, your mouth will receive a piece of bread, the very body of Christ, and wine the very blood of Christ. And this week, Jesus will come to you in our home, and your family, and your marriage and say to you, "Let me be your guest and let me show you once again the miracles I did for you so you can live each day as my brother and sister and dear child of my heavenly Father." "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good." Amen.