

Epiphany 2
January 17, 2016

“The Wedding Guest Who Changed Water into Wine”

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.

They were poor and unable to pay their bills. Sometimes it was so tough there was not enough money to pay the rent or even buy food for the family. She worked the evening shift at a fast food place. He worked at a local convenience store. One day he bought a lottery ticket. It proved to be the winning number. Overnight he became a millionaire. They bought a home, paid off their debts and shared their wealth with family and friends. A few years later they were divorced. They could not handle the change this large infusion of money had brought into their lives.

Before us this morning we have a man and woman getting married in Cana of Galilee. Their wedding day was richly blessed not because some wealthy family member gave them a large amount of cash. Their day was richly blessed because Jesus was there. It was at this wedding in Cana of Galilee that he revealed his glory to them and to us by changing water into wine.

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, we are the richest people in the world because Jesus has come into our lives and revealed his glory to us. As the gospel of John says, "We have seen his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." You actually believe with all your heart that Jesus changed water into wine. Through these miracles Jesus reveals his glory to you. He shows you that believing in him for your future glory is the most the important blessing you have in your life. Let's take a closer look at **"The Wedding Guest Who Changed Water into Wine."**

Jesus saw the need

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Jesus and his disciples has also been invited to the wedding.”

Jesus was there. His ministry is just beginning. He is in the process of calling his first disciples. Yet he takes the time to attend this wedding in Cana of Galilee. He enjoyed being with people and sharing in their laughter.

The sour faced Pharisees did not like the way Jesus enjoyed sitting down with people and eating meals with them. They accused him of being a “glutton and drunkard.” I once read that during the pietistic movement in the Lutheran Church, the little children in the orphanages at Halle were not allowed to smile because that was considered to be too frivolous.

How much laughter is in your marriage? How high does this smile meter go in your home and your personal life? One very busy pastor of a large congregation once wrote that that he wanted his kids to remember him, not by the sermons he preached, or the churches he started, or the books he wrote or the conferences he attended, but the warm summer day when he threw their mom into the swimming pool with all her clothes on and lived to tell about it. Jesus said in John 10, “I have come that they might have life and have it to the full.” It was a joy for this family in Cana of Galilee to have Jesus at their wedding. It was an even greater joy because it was here that he performed his first miracle.

Jesus certainly knows the ups and downs, and problems and troubles we experience in our families, our marriages and our personal lives. He cared about this family that ran out of wine. “When the wine was gone, Jesus’ mother said to him, ‘They have no more wine.’” In those days wine was a symbol of joy and gladness. It was also mixed with water to make the water more drinkable especially if the water came from a stagnant well or even worse a cistern. To run out of wine was a major embarrassment. Do you remember the wedding where the bride fainted, or the bridegroom had way too much to drink and made a fool of himself? Remember the wedding in Cana where they ran out of wine?

How does Jesus handle this problem? First he says to his mother, “Dear woman why do you involve me? My time has not yet come.” In the kindest possible way Jesus wants his mother to know that he was in control. He knows the best time to step in and help people and show them his glory. I fear there is a little bit of Mary in all of us. We tend to think that we know the best timing for the Lord to show us his glory rather than leaving things in his hands.

As I was working through this I thought back to a time in my life when I thought the Lord’s timing was not right for my personal life. I wondered why my classmates were married and why I was still single. It isn’t easy being single when you are in the ministry. I prayed often to find someone. The Lord did not answer my prayer immediately. He said my time has not yet come. But then he allowed me to meet Susan. He allowed me to see his glory not only in his presence at our wedding day but also his presence throughout our married life.

I also recalled being troubled when my cousin Kathy died in a tragic car accident while she was working in Glacier National Park. She was very kind and loving. She was attending Martin Luther College to be a Lutheran elementary school teacher. The car she was riding

in was being driven by a careless man who rolled the car over on Two Medicine Ridge. Four people died and the careless driver survived. It was hard to be one of the cousins who carried her body to the grave. God's ways are not our ways. His plan was to have Kathy see Jesus in all his glory long before I did.

Jesus answered that need

And now with perfect timing Jesus steps in to perform his first miracle so we can see his glory. He tells the servants to fill the stone water jars with water. They fill them to the brim. These stone jars were large. They were able to hold about thirty gallons of water and they were filled to the brim. Did they get the water from a nearby well? Was it stagnant water from a cistern? Jesus wanted the jars filled to the brim. Maybe the water was not the best, but it is about to become the best wine every made.

We are told that these stone water jars were used for storing water to be used by the Jews for ceremonial washing. By this time the Jewish people have added multiple layers of cleansing laws and rituals to what was required in the Old Testament. They believed that keeping these laws allowed them to achieve glory with God. Watch now as Jesus takes this water and uses it to show his glory as God and the glory that he offers us!

Jesus said, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." They did so. The master of the banquet was not told where the wine came from. It was a blind tasting. Imagine his joy as the servants come with more wine for the banquet, especially since he worried about running out of wine. Now look at his face as he tastes the wine. Immediately he calls for the bridegroom and then proclaims joyfully, "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 until now."

Can you imagine how surprised they were to see the stone jars filled with choice wine instead of water used for washing? There would be more than enough wine for the guests, more than enough to send some home with people, and more than enough to sell at the local market to raise funds for this newly married couple. Do you remember the wedding at Cana of Galilee? Do you remember how good the wine was? Do you remember how it was Jesus who turned the water into wine?

When Johnny Carson was the host of The Tonight Show he interviewed an eight year old boy who had rescued two friends in a coal mine outside his hometown in West Virginia. As Johnny questioned the boy, it became apparent that the young man was a Christian. So Johnny asked him if he attended Sunday school. When the boy said he did Johnny inquired, "What are you learning in Sunday school?" "Last week," came his reply, "our lesson was about Jesus going to a wedding and turning water into wine." The audience roared, but Johnny tried to keep a straight face. Then he said, "And what did you learn from that story?" The boy squirmed in his chair. It was apparent he hadn't thought about this. But then he lifted up his face and said, "If you're going to have a wedding, make sure you invite Jesus!"

If you are going to have a wedding, make sure you invited Jesus. I have been invited to perform the wedding ceremony for Jared Evers and Sarah Ashe. It will be in Lake Tahoe.

Jesus will be present with us in prayers and in his Word and in the thoughts of this young man and young woman as they vow to be husband and wife for as long as they live. "If you are going to have a wedding, make sure you invite Jesus." If you are going to have Christian marriage be sure to invite Jesus. If you are going to have a Christian family, then be sure to invite Jesus.

We desperately need Jesus in our homes and in our hearts. To be a husband or wife in marriage is extremely humbling. To be a father or mother, son or daughter, friend or member of a Christian congregation is also extremely humbling. You don't have to look very far in your personal life to see the many places you fall short of God's glory. This past week I asked the ladies in our Santa Maria Terrace if they thought they could survive winning the large lottery. One dear lady said, "I'd sure like to try." We struggle each day with thoughts about things that are so unimportant compared to the glory that Jesus offers us.

I look at the times I have failed and fallen short of God's glory. There is no way I or you can be loved by God and stand before him in the final judgment. But then I turn to the six water pots filled to the brim with wine, wine that stains the stone pots red. This was the first miracle. Then we think of the miracle of Jesus' blood pouring from the cross and staining it red to forgive us for all the times we fall short of his glory. We think of the miracle of taking his body and blood with the bread and wine for the forgiveness of our sin. Some day we will stand before Jesus in all his glory because of all these miracles this wedding guest did to save us. Amen.