

Knowing Jesus in Epiphany  
Wedding at Cana  
John 2:1-11  
Second Sunday After the Epiphany  
January 20, 2019  
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John 2:1-11 (NRSV)

The Wedding at Cana

**2** On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. **2** Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. **3** When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." **4** And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come." **5** His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." **6** Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. **7** Jesus said to them, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. **8** He said to them, "Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward." So they took it. **9** When 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 **10** and 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." **11** Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

Pastor Gene and I share our sermons – sometimes earlier than later – and it gives us a chance to help with edits or in my case for today, *'cause Gene's was earlier, to borrow a story:*

A relative asked a young boy what he was learning in Sunday school and the little guy replied with the story that Kim just read for us...about Jesus going to a wedding and changing water into wine.

The relative then asked, "What do you 'spose that's about?"

And, after thinking a little bit, the boy said, "Well if you are going to have a wedding, you had better make sure Jesus is there!"

Smart kid, wouldn't you agree?

What HE had learned, early on....and what we should remember is that it's **always** a good thing to include Jesus in the BIG and the little moments in our lives....every moment, yes?

In John's Gospel, miracles are called "signs."

There are seven in John's gospel, but the FIRST sign that Jesus does was turning water into wine.

The last verse that Kim read says, "Jesus did this....and his disciples believed in him."

I guess they needed inspiration.

Which is kinda bass-ackwards, isn't it?

From the other gospel writers we know that the disciples "just" followed him!

They left their careers as fishermen on the Sea of Galilee. And yet, they STILL need a sign?

Okay. They needed it.

But isn't it interesting that the sign or miracle wasn't a "biggie?"

It wasn't healing a sick person or raising someone from the dead; forgiving sins or sending a demon away.

No. Jesus' first sign was making *gallons* of excellent wine that saved a couple newlyweds from embarrassment.

There's a lot to unpack in these eleven verses...

...but in this Season of Epiphany we're looking at our lectionary readings with an eye for "who is Jesus."

Last Sunday, we got to know Jesus through the observations of John the Baptizer...what a confirmation John received! The ONE has come! The Messiah, the one John was proclaiming to "prepare for" was right there, soaking up the water of the Jordan and being called "Beloved."

So what do today's verses encourage us to see? To know WHAT about Jesus?

I want to ask you: Does this *sign*, not a "biggie" miracle, make Jesus seem more approachable, you know, someone we wouldn't be so embarrassed to introduce to our friends than, say, Jesus the exorcist or Jesus who touches lepers?

Why does Jesus start with THIS miracle?

Scholars have written that Jesus loved a good party – which is why some of his opponents called him a glutton and a drunkard. We know he got into trouble for sharing meals with the “wrong kind” of people.

But, I don't think we can assume that this *miracle* was trivial, 'cause the evangelist John wouldn't have used the word “sign” for it.

“Sign” is John's word for healings and resurrections of dead people and feeding a multitude with a paltry lunch **and** Jesus appearing, resurrected from the dead in the Upper Room.

We **have to be** impressed that “signs” are big, important, meaningful, reality-shifting events.

But, I'll admit, it's fair to ask...and to dig into God's Word to find our answers...how is making a ridiculous amount of wine at a podunk wedding measure up with those other miracles?

As a “sign,” what does turning water into wine point to?

Why is this wine so important?

And why did John write, “and his disciples believed in him?”

Our faithful, OT prophet Isaiah wrote this:

*“On this mountain[Mount Zion] the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear.*

*And he will destroy on this mountain the shroud that is cast over all peoples, the sheet that is spread over all nations; he will swallow up death forever.*

*Then the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces, and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken.*

*It will be said on that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us. This is the Lord for whom we have waited; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation (Isaiah 25:6-9).*

This is a description of what God revealed to Isaiah about the age to come...the fulfillment of God's plans. This banquet on the mountain was what the faithful people were waiting for!

I mentioned it earlier, there's a lot to unpack in today's verses.

Wine is mentioned in Scripture 235 times (*Young's Analytical Concordance to the Bible.*)

It's mentioned, as early as when Isaac gave the blessing to his son back in Genesis (27:28.) "...an abundance of ...wine" was prophesied as part of the heritage of God's chosen people.

And a wedding signifies the perfect covenant, a union, between God and Israel.

When we combine those two things – wine AND a wedding ...

It was a special time...with fine foods and REALLY, REALLY good wine (since Jesus was there)...we get something "eschatological" – one of those schmancy words for a great celebration that points to the last days; the feast at the end of time as we know it...the celebration that will happen when God restores Creation to it's perfection.

And WHOM DO YOU SUPPOSE brings that perfection?

Come on! It's your Sunday School answer to everything! JESUS!

Like the little boy earlier – "when it's a BIG thing – Jesus had better be there!"

Listen, when Jesus IS anywhere - transformation happens!

This wedding (doesn't matter if it was Cana or not) was a place of signs that point to something REALLY big! And THAT celebration will be THE celebration of ALL celebrations!

When Jesus turned SIX huge pots of water into gallons of THE BEST wine possible at a wedding reception, it is a sign, pointing to the scriptural promises that God will bring all people to God's own self.

It will be a time when God will pour down God's love and joy on all people.

And the perfection that lies in God's plans for the future is real.

Wait – there’s a little more!

That future’s abundance and grace and joy began in Jesus Christ.

And the future’s glory and grace and love of God are available now.

We don’t know if the folks attending the wedding got it.

Not all, I’m sure.

But, John DID write that the disciples did!

And that was enough to reinforce John the Baptizer’s preaching....

The Beloved we talked about last Sunday was saying, “Look! God’s future is breaking in now! It’s beginning.”

It began in Jesus.

And like the water jugs overflowing, what else does God’s future look like?

It looks like hungry people being fed, sick people being healed, dead people being raised from death, and death itself being defeated.

Dear Ones, God’s future is available now, in our “today” lives!

We don’t have to wait to experience hope...or to trust that God will keep God’s promises.

Because Jesus was “there” opening the BELIEF of those present, and John writing it down, and we believing BY FAITH we have joy and hope and new life now.

Granted, we live in days when perfection isn’t fully restored.

THAT wholeness still lies ahead.

But we can trust Jesus AND SHARE WITH OTHERS that God will keep God’s promises.

God’s future has already broken into the present because of Jesus.

So, how do we participate in this God’s perfect, joy-filled future that is available now?

The mother of Jesus (John didn’t even name her specifically) gives the answer: “Do whatever he tells you.”

She was talking to the servants.

Who are we called to be?

Servants!

So, DO WHATEVER HE TELLS YOU.

Seek life at its source.

Seek joy at its source.

Seek to know what Jesus Christ asks of you!

That's the essence of discipleship and the key for joining Jesus in his *new way of being* in the world.

Do whatever he tells you.

Be like them, the ones who saw with their own eyes the amazing thing that happened. WATER INTO WINE.

They got to be witnesses to a miracle!

They got to participate.

They *just did* what Jesus told them to do:

“Fill the jars with water.”

And they do. No protests, “We need wine, not water.”

“Now draw some out.”

And they do. No *whining* (sorry couldn't resist,) “What's that going to achieve?”

“And take it . . . So they took it.”

No, “Hey, Jesus, I got a better idea . . .”

They just do the simple, straightforward things Jesus tells them to do and they get to participate in a miracle.

Do whatever Jesus tells you.

The mundane becomes miraculous.

There are lots of do-verbs in God's Word.

There are commands.

There are instructions, that really aren't that hard to understand when it comes right down to it, that are about simple obedience.

**Jesus** tells us to do things: love, share, give, serve, listen, learn, worship, and pray.

God even blesses us the particulars and the contexts like jobs and families, a community, and a family of faith in which to be obedient.

Love *him*.

Love *her*.

Love *them*.

Share your money, your time, your talents and gifts and abilities with *that child*,  
with *that older person*,  
with *that family*.

Worship together here, (or it could happen in a café or your car) AND ENCOURAGE others to come with you!

Pray at your desk, at your bedside,

...with your child or grandchild,

...for your spouse or your parent, for this country and the world.

But always, always, always, **listen for what Jesus tells you to do.**

And do it.

You may participate in a miracle and get a glimpse, a sign, of God's perfect future, a right here, right now.

Just do what he tells you to do.

Amen!!!