

Immanuel (Augsburg) Lutheran Church
Shobonier, Illinois
Epiphany 2C
January 19, 2025
John 2:1-11

A Sign for Faith

This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him. (John 2:11 ESV)

Dearly Beloved,

Everything Jesus does is for faith - that we would believe in Him for salvation. It's no different with today's Gospel. That Jesus' first miracle, His first sign, was done at a wedding in no accident. For from the beginning Marriage has been a metaphor for the relationship between God and His people. Likewise, after Paul tells wives to submit to their husbands and husbands to love their wives, he says, "This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church." (Eph. 5:32). And in Revelation, St. John describes the marriage feast of the Lamb and His Bride, the Church.

Thus, the life of the Church in her public worship is one of a wedding feast. Christ, our Bridegroom, unites with His Bride, the Church, when He comes into His kingdom upon the cross. The marriage covenant is signed in water and blood, pouring forth from His side.

But, alas, in our experience, once the wedding festivities are over, the reality of marriage hits. We quickly find that the wine of excitement, joy, and gladness gives way to the water of the mundane dreariness of everyday life. The happiness of the celebration turns into dirty socks, dirty dishes, and wrestling over the remote control. And even in the best of times, it seems the wine runs out all too soon.

And so we worry. We don't know what to do to make things better. Yet, hopefully, at some point, we remember to run to Jesus, as Mary did, and lay our need before Him. Even then, in our unbelief, we expect, or at least desire, a sign, a wonder, or a voice from on high ready to fix the problem instantly. After all, Jesus is the Son of the Most High God. He can certainly do it!

But often, it seems, instead of a sign, we get a straight pin thrust into our balloon. "What does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come." POP! Jesus doesn't care. Jesus won't answer my prayer. My hour of need is come but the Lord's hour and my hour aren't the same.

And that's hard to hear, isn't it, dear Christian? We know and believe that God hears and answers prayer. Yet, how often don't we think that God ought to answer prayer in our time, not His. So when it appears that God says "no" to our prayer, or even "wait," or "not yet," we lose hope. We don't consider whether or not His "no," or His delay, is actually the best for us. We get angry because it seems He just doesn't care.

Notice, though, that Mary didn't respond in anger or despair. She didn't think Jesus was disrespectful or that He had it in for her. She presents the need to her Son because she knows He can help. Jesus' response, though, sounds as though her request fell on deaf ears. Still, she tells the servants do whatever He tells them. That, Beloved, is faith - faith which clings to Jesus and trusts in His grace, even when it seems He's not interested in helping. Mary shows us how foolish we are when we get angry with God for His seeming indifference.

Repent, dear people of God. He is not indifferent. He knows our need and He hears our prayers. After all, He sent His only-begotten Son into the flesh to redeem us from sin, death and the devil. The most-high God, the God of inaccessible majesty, the God whose glory we cannot see because it would destroy us, comes to us unhappy men in the garb of man. Thus we sing: "Can we find a Friend so faithful/ Who will all our sorrows share? / Jesus knows our every weakness/ Take it to the Lord in prayer."

Yes, Mary took the problem to the Lord. And the Lord took care of it, but in an unexpected way - at least unexpected to us. Jesus tells the servants to fill six large pots with water. And though it seems that it doesn't address the need, they do it because Mary had told them to do whatever He tells you. Oh, that we would do the same! Once the jars were filled, He tells the servants to draw some out and take it to the master of the feast. They do, he tasted it, the water having become wine. Not just any old wine though, but good wine, the best wine.

What does this mean for us? We are used to just getting by with any old thing. We don't dine on the richest of fare every night, but we do have something to eat. Our clothes may not be the latest fashion or bear designer labels, but we do have clothing. We don't live in multi-million dollar mansions, but we do have a roof over our heads.

Yet, Jesus gives us more than "just getting by." He gives us the good wine. He doesn't know how to give any but the best. For He gives us forgiveness. He gives us eternal life. He gives us hope. He sets us free. He answers our greatest prayer: deliverance from every evil, including death.

The disciples recognize from this miracle that Jesus is the Son of God and the true Messiah; since He is able to do what no other human being is able to do, namely, alter the nature of created things by changing water into wine.

We recognize from this miracle that Jesus can do the impossible. He alters our present and our future when He takes on our flesh to bear our sin and be our Savior. Just as Mary believes Jesus can do something about the lack of wine, so we believe that Jesus can do something about our lives – now and for eternity.

Thus, by God's grace we learn to believe who Christ is and to seek His help and mercy with confidence whenever we are in need. And He will supply our need at the proper time.

And isn't that the rub? He answers our prayer in His way and time, not ours. He's not our genie who serves at our beck and call, and grants our every wish. Rather, He is the One who loves us and gave His life for us that we might be adorned as a bride for her husband. He who is holy comes to us in our unholiness to make us His Bride. St. Paul tells us, "Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish." (Eph. 5:25-27).

Thus, Jesus continues to sanctify us and cleanse us through the preaching and teaching of His Holy Word. For this Word is living and active. This Word destroys death. This Word bestows life. This Word creates and sustains faith. This Word washes you clean in Baptism. This Word absolves sins. This Word brings forgiveness in Communion. This Word carries you into Paradise when you die. This Word will make all things new on Judgment Day.

Christ performed His miracles, His signs, for faith. For God's Word and His miracles are the two pillars and foundation of faith. We come to know God's good and gracious will for us from His Word and promises. We come to know God is all-powerful from the signs His Son performs. Thus, we learn not only who Christ is, but that He is for us, so that we will believe in Him. For in Jesus, God's miraculous Sign for us wrapped in flesh and blood, turns our sorrow into joy, our sadness into gladness, and our water into good wine. To Him be the glory now and forever. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

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