

**Sermon on John 2, 1-11, 14.01.2007**

*The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Love of God and the Communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen.*

**Text:**

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

Dear Congregation,

The Jews attached great importance to the high moments of life. Thus a wedding was not just a brief ceremony, but an experience shared by the entire community. The typical wedding feast could last up to seven days. That sounds strange to our modern way of thinking, but this offered a bright interlude in an otherwise dreary existence. The ceremony would begin on Tuesday at midnight. After the wedding the father of the bride would take his daughter to every house so that everyone might congratulate her. It was a community experience. Weddings were a time of joy.

Years ago when Johnny Carson was the host of The Tonight Show he interviewed an eight year old boy. The young man was asked to appear because he had rescued two friends in a coalmine outside his hometown in West Virginia. As Johnny questioned the boy, it became apparent to him and the audience 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 when Jesus went to a wedding and turned 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!"

You know, that is pretty profound advice. It is a good thing to have Jesus at our wedding ceremonies, indeed it is good to have Jesus everywhere that is of significance to our lives.

The gospel today about how the wine ran out at the wedding in Cana – and how Mary asks Jesus to do something about it - and he does - ends with these words:

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.

He thus revealed his glory - and his disciples put their faith in them. The gospel of John speaks often about signs and about faith. Signs as you all know point to something - for those with eyes to see - they testify to something that is greater than they are - and it is that greater thing we are meant to grasp - and not simply the sign itself.

The first sign that Jesus did points to many things about himself and what he was about. I would just like to mention a few this morning.

First - Jesus' turning water into wine is itself a picture of all that he came to do. Jesus takes what is and shows us that it has the possibility to become something else. What is - that which is tired, worn out, devoid of joy, empty, and lacking purpose - can be transformed. It can be turned into something rich, fragrant, and ripe with the fullness of joy through his presence, through his care.

There is a lot of gospel in that for all of us. Jesus can bring new life. He can fill the emptiness in our lives - he can take whatever it is that we bring to him - no matter how little - or how much - and utterly remake. He has the capability of changing our lives and renewing hope, faith and trust in God, which might be going when we hit a rock in our life.

Second - John notes that the wine came from the huge thirty-gallon jugs that stood full of water at the front of the house, vessels that were used by observant Jews to fulfill the rules on ceremonial washing. Even a wedding feast had to honour the rituals of cleansing. Jesus transformed those six jugs, ponderous symbols of the old way, into wineskins, harbingers of the new. From the purified water of the Pharisees came the choice new wine of a whole new era. The time for ritual cleansing had passed; the time for celebration had begun.

Third - the Gospel story emphasizes the abundance of Jesus' provision of wine. The wedding guests went from having no wine at all to having almost enough to swim in. Now, the age of the Messiah was long expected to be one of abundance - one in which the wine of joy - the cup of salvation - would always be full and overflowing. Thus this miracle is a sign, for those who have eyes to see, of Jesus' Messiahship. He is the long-awaited deliverer of Israel. He is the one who will purify Israel and all people. He provides more than is needed.

Fourth - the miracle takes place at a wedding feast. Marriage has long been a symbol of the relationship between God and the people of God.

If you take your text sheet into your hand again, you can see, that there is a reading from Isaiah printed on it:

*4 You shall no more be termed Forsaken,  
and your land shall no more be termed Desolate;  
but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her,  
and your land Married;  
for the Lord delights in you,  
and your land shall be married.  
5 For as a young man marries a young woman,  
so shall your builder marry you,  
and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride,  
so shall your God rejoice over you.*

The prophet tells us that at the time of Israel's restoration and vindication, God will take delight in them and their land will be married. As a young man marries a maiden, so will your sons marry you; as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you.

The fact that the first sign that Jesus did - was at a wedding would not be lost on people. It was their belief that at the time of salvation that God would provide a table for feasting for his servants and a cup that would never run dry. That imagery is in fact present in the much loved twenty- third Psalm of David whose final verses say:

*5 You spread a table before me in the presence of those who trouble me; You have anointed my head with oil; and my cup is running over. 6 Surely your goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.*

Fifth, In this, his first sign, Jesus also stresses the place of his mother, Mary, in the work of redemption. It is Mary who triggers Jesus' first act of public ministry by saying to him: "They have no wine." It was a simple request showing that she trusted that her son would immediately respond and help. Jesus' response to her seemed slightly brusque. He said, "Woman, what is that to me and you; my hour has not yet come."

The only other place where Jesus calls his mother "woman" is at his passion as she stood beneath the cross. Then he handed her over to the care of John and made her the mother of all of us. Our original mother was the "woman" Eve. But Eve, as woman, handed down to us original sin and death. In calling his mother "Woman," Jesus seems to be saying, "You are the new Eve. As it was promised to her that her seed would crush the head of the serpent - so through you I have come to do that which has been promised - I have come to overwhelm sin and death with righteousness and life."

Which leads me to the last thing I want you to note this day about this, the first sign that Jesus did. The miracle at Cana is, among other things, a preview of the last Supper, the hour when Jesus transforms not water into wine but wine into blood, his blood shed for all humanity.

By telling Mary "my hour has not yet come" Jesus links what she is asking him to do with his sacrifice on the cross. The best wine is saved for the last - the wine of salvation - a salvation won for us completely by Christ Jesus when he gave up his life for us, - a salvation that is not just for one day, or the one week during which a wedding is celebrated, - but forever.

Mary tells the servants in today's reading to "Do whatever Jesus tells you." That is what faith is all about, responding to the words of Jesus, trusting that his word will be fulfilled, trusting that as he transformed the water of purification in the wine of joy, so he will transform us and lead us into the kingdom where the best is not only saved for the last, but where the best lasts.

Dear Congregation,

This is not a just a story of old about a weird experiment in which Jesus proves that he does need to buy wine in the LCBO. This miracle stands for something which goes beyond the actual fact of changing water into wine. It is a story about the power to change, the capability of providing and constant process of giving himself for us.

It is not that we are asked to believe in this particular miracle. Mind you that all miracles speak about the unlimited power of God and not the transformation of elements or the miraculous act as such. What it all boils down to for me is that with this guest at our table we do not have to fear that we will run out of hope. If we invite Jesus and celebrate every day of our lives as we would celebrate a wedding, our life can become meaningful and blessed, purposeful and full of happiness. This story is also telling a truth which goes beyond this life of ours. But already we can actually taste the taste of the promise of a kingdom to come, in which for sure there will be no lack of anything and in which we will enter, knowing that we will enter into the fullness of God's love.

As we receive Communion today, may we open our lives anew to God's gifts of grace. The best is yet to come! The glory of God is at hand. Amen.

***And the Peace of God which passes all understanding, may keep our hearts and minds in Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.***