

Epiphany 2 1/20/19
John 2:1-11 C

THIS, THE FIRST OF HIS SIGNS, JESUS DID AT CANA IN GALILEE, AND MANIFESTED HIS GLORY. AND HIS DISCIPLES BELIEVED IN HIM.

As far as wedding receptions go, this one was a dandy. It was pretty impressive. It was a great location, Cana in Galilee. By all accounts, this was a pretty nice place. This little town was built into a hill, overlooking a scenic, beautiful valley. As far as guests go, you have the “A” list here: you have Mary, the mother of Jesus; Jesus Himself; and you have all of His disciples. When it comes to throwing a reception, throwing a dinner, this one puts us in our day to shame. We have the buffet line, a piece of cake, maybe a ticket for a free drink, and the DJ until midnight. This was a Jewish wedding feast. This was designed to last seven full days.

But that maybe couldn't happen with this one. Here's why: Back in those days, wine was pretty much a staple at every meal. To run out of wine was a bad thing. To run out of wine at something as important as a wedding feast was a horrific embarrassment for the host. It was, in essence, giving the message to your guests that you didn't care about them. It's not something you wanted to happen. And if it did, you wanted to keep it on the down low. You would quickly try to solve the problem by doing something like getting your cousin on your mom's side, giving him some cash, and sending him to the bottle shop for more wine before anyone found out.

And so this wedding at Cana, with its need, was the setting for the first miracle of Jesus. God in human body turned water into wine. “This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory,” the Evangelist tells us.

I. Dear Saints of God, this miracle teaches us that God hears and answers His people's petitions and cries.

In turning water into wine at the wedding at Cana, Jesus was not just being a nice guy. At His baptism, He began His public ministry. Before, He had been simply the son of a humble carpenter. Now, He was to be known as the Son of God, "very God of very God" and yet true man. So that people would know He was the Son of God, His Father had spoken of Him at His baptism, "You are My beloved Son; with You I am well pleased." Now, to prove that He is God, He did a miracle, which only God could do. And, the first miracle He did was to turn water into wine. He did this to fulfill the Old Testament. The Old Testament which, as we know, looks forward to the coming of Christ. And, the Old Testament told us that when the Christ came, he would bring wine to His people in abundance.

The book of Genesis tells us that when the Messiah comes: "[We can bind] our donkey to the vine and [the] donkey's colt to the choicest vine, and we could wash our garments in the wine" (Ge 49). That may sound silly! Why would you tie your donkey to the vine? If you did that, the donkey would eat the grapes. And remember, this was a desert. It was hard to grow grapes, so why would tie your donkey and its colt to the vine so that they could eat the grapes? Because again, the Messiah would bring wine in such abundance, that God's people won't need all the grapes that are grown. In fact, God's people would have so many grapes that they would feed them to their donkeys and wash their clothes in wine!

Likewise, the prophet Joel tells us that when the Messiah comes, "The threshing floors shall be full of grain; the vats shall overflow with wine and oil" (Joel 2). The Prophet Amos tells us that when the Messiah comes, "the plowman shall overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who

sows the seed; the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it” (Amos 9).

Do you recall those words of Mary to her Son? “They have no wine.” Scarcity. Need. This is the curse sin has cast upon us. When God created Eden and placed us into it, all was perfect. All was there to serve us, to make life sweet. But, then came the fall. We were cast out of Eden. And now, “Cursed is the ground because of you...by the sweat of your face you shall eat bread”. Sin has done this do us.

The first miracle the Messiah did when He came was to give His people wine, because that is what the Old Testament said the Messiah would do.

II. God hears the petitions and cries of His people and comes to them, to rescue them. Wine symbolizes all the Messiah’s blessings. Epiphany, God has come to us in Christ to remove the curse of sin from us and from our lives, to give us all good gifts.

Our Old Testament lesson says it this way,

“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 **BEULAH** [*“Married,” but the Hebrew for married is Beulah*]; for the Lord delights in you, and your land shall be married. For as a young man marries a young woman, so shall your sons marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.”

Jesus has come! No more will we be forsaken, in need, because of sin. The Son of God humbled Himself to be born of a virgin. And now in human form, he would manifest, reveal, His glory. Chiefly, He did it by being lifted up upon the cross of Calvary. There, He did away with sin by sacrificing Himself upon that altar, so that you are forgiven all your sins.

Though He was buried, the tomb's dark portal could not hold Him. He rose to life again the 3rd day, that we may rise to new life in Him.

“This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested His glory. And His disciples believed in Him,” John writes. In our Baptism, that blessed “washing of rebirth and renewal of the Holy Spirit,” as the Bible calls it, God the Holy Spirit works faith in us, so that we believe in Jesus, and believing, that forgiveness, that life, that salvation He won by His suffering, His death, His resurrection, are our forgiveness, life, and salvation. Believing, we have life in His name.

Baptized and living in Christ, we are now God's dearly beloved children. And as a father loves and cares for His children, God loves and cares for us.

III. At the wedding of Cana, God heard the petitions and cries of His people. This miracle teaches us and comforts us that God He hears our petitions and cries of His people and He comes to give us all His good gifts in Christ.

This is why the Bible encourages us, “Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need (He 4:16).” Under the Introduction to the Lord's Prayer, Luther reinforces this in his *Small Catechism*, “With these words God tenderly invites us to believe that we are His true children, so that with all boldness and confidence we may ask Him as dear children ask their dear father.”

Our Gospel lesson today teaches us that God hears and answers His people's petitions and cries. Christ Jesus has come to give us all His good gifts, chiefly, the forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and salvation. How true are the words of St. James, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from

above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change” (James 1).

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.