

Sermon Notes: January 20, 2019

Focus: Jesus' first miracle – saving a couple's party foul

Lectionary Readings:

http://www.lectionarypage.net/YearC_RCL/Epiphany/CEpi2_RCL.html

I think this is one of the oddest stories in the New Testament. Jesus goes to a wedding. He is co-opted into miracle work by his mother. He is annoyed by her request to do something about a problem - running out of alcohol.

Once he is willing to go in this ill-advised errand, Mary lines up the wait staff and tells them to follow orders. They do. They see a miracle of water to wine. But neither the wedding couple, the guests, nor the MC of the party knows what has happened. After this, the disciples believe. This seems like bad marketing to me. The savior of the world should at least do something that more people can see. The waitstaff and misfit disciples seem like a bad target demographic.

I want to do little bit of speculation - the wedding couple was poor and/or not well connected. If they had connections, many people would have chipped in – no crisis. The ancient near east was much more of potluck culture than we are. The village took responsibility for each other. So something was afoot.

Or...if they weren't poor, they would have certainly bought far more wine than they did. It probably would have been better than the two buck chuck they bought. They would have shown their status better.

Personal Flashback to 2002, I remember Kimberly and I paying for the rehearsal dinner --my parents didn't. While planning, I wanted to go on-the-cheap for drinks to limit consumption. That lasted 5.5 seconds before Kimberly shot down my stingy tendencies. I am glad she did, because I remember years later going to a reception that was a cash bar. "How dare they" I said to myself as I clutched my pearls in horror.

In Jesus' culture, hospitality reigned far more supreme than today. If you were not a good and well prepared host, it could follow you for decades. So regardless of the reason, the couple was going to be in for some serious embarrassment.

John's Point

John is the only Gospel telling this wedding story because it wanted to make a point about how God acts in the world. The wedding feast was one of seven "signs". The cumulative whole of these signs paint a picture of Jesus. He blessed behind the scenes and in crowds. Jesus healed strangers and resurrected friends. He could control the

material world by making wine or even walking on water. Jesus healed those who wanted it and those who didn't.

The seven signs in the Gospel of John are:

1. Changing water into wine at Cana in John 2:1-11 - "the first of the signs"
2. Healing the royal official's son in Capernaum in John 4:46-54
3. Healing the paralytic at Bethesda in John 5:1-15
4. Feeding the 5000 in John 6:5-14
5. Jesus walking on water in John 6:16-24
6. Healing the man blind from birth in John 9:1-7
7. The raising of Lazarus in John 11:1-45

Taken in total, Jesus was on the loose. They showed Jesus blessing in unpredictable situations for unexpected life and abundance.

John's purpose

John is as subtle as a truck. The gospel story is written so that we, by experiencing Jesus' life, may believe:

Chapter 20:30-31

*Jesus performed many other **signs** in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.*

Back to the First Sign of the wedding

So maybe Cana is not as weird as it seems? I still think it is odd. But it's odd with a great point.

- God is involved with everyone, especially behind-the-scenes people.
- God sweats the small stuff.
- God is not too important to bless without a big parade.

Let's keep our eyes and heart open. Let's look in the nooks and crannies of our lives where we might just find the best stuff.

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