

## Life in the Spirit

Epiphany 2 Yr C John 2:1-11 January 16, 2022

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Jesus turned water into wine. Even people who have never read the Bible or been to church probably know that. But while many know that Jesus changed water into wine few can say where that took place, why it happened, and the difference it makes. And those things are actually the more important parts of the story of the wedding feast of Cana. For the final verses of our reading says “Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.”

Because the truth is that while changing water into wine captures our attention it doesn't have the impact of giving sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, or life to the dying. Which is why the gospel calls what Jesus does a sign rather than a miracle. Because signs are meant to capture our attention and then point us to something greater and open our eyes to something we didn't see before. And here we are told that what Jesus does causes the disciples to believe in him. Because Jesus shows them something important not about wine or parties but about God.

Now I don't want to dismiss the fact that Jesus is at a wedding feast, with family and friends where there is eating and drinking. After all this is a celebration of a wonderful event for a couple, their families, and the whole community. Everyone is having fun, enjoying each others company, and to use an old fashioned phrase making merry. And that isn't a side note but where Jesus performs the sign which causes the disciples to believe. The wedding feast, the place where people are happy and rejoicing, is the place where Jesus shows the disciples about God and grace.

The last few weeks I've been asked and I've asked others how the holidays were. And I've noticed that everyone seems to be downplaying what happened during Christmas. Now I know the restrictions and fears changed our plans and muted our gatherings but I also expect that just like me you has some nice even wonderful moments over the holidays. Yet this year it seems like we're being quiet about those things. Its almost as if we're hesitant to mention anything good amidst all the bad that is taking place. As if we really shouldn't be enjoying ourselves in the middle of the fifth wave of Covid.

Yet in our lesson, Jesus is at a celebration and enjoying himself along with the

others. And let me be clear that in that town where the wedding feast happens there is difficulty, there is fear and there is worry because they are living in a conquered land occupied by a foreign army. So don't be afraid to embrace the joy you find in these days and don't be afraid to share that joy. Yes, Christmas may have been quiet and the winter days ahead may not be filled with everything we want but I know there is and will be joy in our days as well. And as people of faith let's never ignore or overlook the good that God brings into our lives.

In our lesson, Mary comes to Jesus to tell him there is a problem with the celebration. The wine has run out. And in this place in the world and time in history that is a real problem. First because the celebration will end early. So the joy will be limited and incomplete and the happy event will be cut short. Second because this will be a source of shame for the couple and their families. Imagine if you will that you have invited guests for a special dinner and as they sit down at the table you realize that you don't have enough food for them. That embarrassment multiplied by a whole community is what Mary is concerned about.

And what Jesus says to Mary doesn't sound very polite but the truth is that the original greek is proper and respectful and Jesus basically tells her that the time for him to take away troubles, to change the world, has not yet come, his time hasn't arrived. And even if we are confused by his words, Mary seems to know that he is going to do something because she tells the servants to do whatever he tells them. Which is a good thing because Jesus instructs them to do something unusual.

He tells the servants to take the water jars used for purification and fill them to the top. The gospel tells us that those jars hold 20-30 gallons so there was around 150 gallons or over 500 litres of water. And the servants draw some to take to the person in charge of the feast. That person takes a sip and asks the groom why he saved the best wine for last because usually people start with the best and as time goes on draw on the lesser food and drink. And because of Jesus the celebration continues.

Sometimes what we are asked to do by God doesn't sound that important. Pray, be kind, be generous, read the Bible. Share and be concerned. Learn and grow as Christians. None of that seems that life altering or world changing. And quite honestly none of it is. No more than the water in those jars were that important they simply allowed the purification ritual to be performed. But when Jesus gets a hold

of what is in there, is able to use what has been prepared, then everything changes.

And that is what God does with our actions and efforts. God takes our prayers and shapes our future. God takes our gifts and uses them to bless others. God takes our time and effort reading scripture to show us a better way. So that when we share and are concerned, we grow to be more like Jesus in our lives. So that when we learn and grow in our faith, we become the people through whom God transforms lives and the world.

Now the servants who draw some of that water have no idea how that water is going to make a difference and most of the time we have no idea how our actions can have an impact and that is where having faith comes in. Faith allows us to move forward when we don't know, faith allows us to carry on when we are unsure. Because faith- trusting, hoping, and believing in Jesus, points us toward God and reminds us that in life God is at work bringing about something even greater.

The disciples see what Jesus does with the water and they believe. They see that Jesus can do incredible things and that he cares about people. They understand that he can make life better and that the grace seen through him is amazing and surprising and bountiful. And they catch a glimpse of even greater things to come.

Because it is easy for us in our lives to look back and assume that what was, what we experienced, what we knew, is the best that can ever happen to us. But the good news is that what God is preparing, what is coming next, is more incredible than anything we have ever known. That is the promise, the hope, the good news of great joy which we hold onto and believe.

For yes, Jesus turns water into wine at the wedding feast at Cana. But what is important is that action is a sign. A sign which shows us that God shares in our joys and cares for us in our lives. A sign which reminds us that when we act in faith God makes a difference in our world. A sign which promises that God is preparing something even greater through the grace and love we see in the cross and empty tomb.