

Pastor Jon's Sermon from Sunday, January 16, 2022

Text: Wedding at Cana story in John 2 where Jesus turns water into wine.

“Signs, Signs, Everywhere There's Signs... of Jesus”

When do you find yourself turning to Jesus for help? All the time? Sometimes? Not at all? Or only when the things you have tried fall short? It is usually the latter for many of us. We as humans try to go it alone.

In our Gospel for today from John 2, Jesus is invited to a wedding in Cana of Galilee. It was probably a wedding for a family friend. Jesus accepted the invitation along with the disciples, and they showed up. Jesus' mother, who interestingly is never actually named in John's Gospel, was there too. We know her as Mary from the other Gospels.

Notice, when everything was going well, nobody sought Jesus out. It was only until the wine was about to give out that Jesus' mother came to him and informed him of the problem. Mary knew these things. She thought of other's needs first. Jesus initially dismissed his mother's nudge... thinking his time had not yet come to reveal his true identity and mission... which will be revealed on the cross and in the resurrection. But Mary knew Jesus and his ability to do something about this scarcity of wine. If something wasn't done, this would be a social disgrace to the groom's family if they ran out of food and drink. Weddings lasted about a week in Jesus' time. Running out of wine would have brought public shame to this family.

Mary turns to the servants, even after Jesus' rebuff, and says, “Do whatever he tells you.” Isn't that the truth? Mary knew Jesus' gifts. People oftentimes know our gifts and talents better than we know ourselves. I have seen it many times when a coach or teacher sees something in us and encourages us to go for it. A person recognizing your gifts can change your life.

Like the brother in Mark's Gospel who said no to his father at first, but then went and did the right thing later, Jesus honored his mom's request.

Jesus had the servants fill up 6 jars of water used for the Jewish rite of purification. For ceremonial washing. They were filled to the brim, which adds to the fact that there was no room to add anything else.

We are talking up to 180 gallons of water. This would have taken some time to fill as water was and still is a precious resource. Once the servants did their part. Jesus had the servants draw some out and take it to the chief steward. And when the chief steward tasted what was in the cup, it was some really good wine. We are not talking Mogen David here.

This was a reversal of how wine was normally served. Usually the host serves the best wine first until the guests become drunk, and takes out the inferior wine later. But this was the best wine for last.

Jesus' blessing and gladdening the wedding at Cana is known as his first sign in John's Gospel. John uses the word sign instead of miracle. They are interchangeable. And signs always point to something ahead. Like the old Burma Shave Signs that kept you wondering what the next one would be.

What does this sign point us toward? The first thing is the sheer abundance of God in Jesus. This miracle would have filled 605 bottles of wine... an extravagant amount. They could have partied for weeks. How is God abundant toward us?

With Grace and forgiveness. This first sign points to God's grace for us. God's unconditional love for us. It should remind us of communion where simple bread and wine can cleanse us from all our sins and set us free to love the neighbor.

The second thing this sign points to is of a God who cares about our everyday lives. This was a wedding. God wants us to find joy in life, at work, in school, at home, or in our communities. Jesus' presence gladdened this wedding. We need to invite Jesus into our

everyday lives, or life passages, our worries, problems. Look what he did here, he turned a bad situation into and blessing.

The third thing this sign points out is that Jesus is there when things run out. How many of you are running short right now? Short of patience, short of resources, short of faith. How many losses have you experienced during this pandemic? Many of us won't turn to Jesus until something runs out: Finances, jobs, food, health, relationships, all of life's problems. "In this story, Jesus takes an empty and inadequate situation and makes the best out of it. He takes the water they have and makes the wine they need. This story encourages us to quit looking at what we have lost or don't have and look to Jesus, putting what we have in his hands." -Raquel St. Clare Lettsome.

And finally gifts. I didn't spend much time on our 1st Corinthians lesson, but we all have spiritual gifts to share. And God didn't gift us just for our own benefit. But for the benefit of all... for the common good. Our gifts aren't meant just for us to profit. But to bless others. Jesus blessed this wedding with his gifts.

And your gifts are yours. We don't need to compare ourselves to others and only see what we are lacking. God made you who you are.

The church needs all of us. Not one of us is more important than the other. But all of us together can bring this abundant love and grace of God to the world. May you find joy in sharing your gifts.

Amen.