

## Sermon for Epiphany 2 – John 2:1-11

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

“Jesus was ... invited to the wedding with His disciples.” Our Lord blessed and honored marriage with His presence and first miracle at Cana in Galilee. At this particular wedding, the wine had run out. In Biblical times, wine was a sign of prosperity and happiness. And men and women are unhappy when they do not have what they want.

The search for happiness is a striving to get what we want. When we get what we want, it brings a new set of wants that must, in turn, be pursued, and so on and so on in an endless cycle of wanting and getting and wanting again and getting more and wanting. In this, there is no contentment, no happiness. The whole direction of grasping, wanting, getting is the reverse of the true way of happiness.

The secret to happiness in anything is found in God. He has nothing to get; He has only everything to give. In giving away His gifts, God has His happiness. True happiness lives in giving, not getting. So that He might give, God needed those to whom He may give gifts. There must be somebody to receive them. Therefore, God created us. He designed us to be recipients of His gifts. Thus, God would fulfill His happiness.

This happiness was not for Himself alone but for His creatures whom He created and equipped for similar giving, for similar happiness. So He created the complementariness of husband and wife and the way of sex. God designed the giving of themselves to each other, the one flesh, the shared happy life of mutual giving. This giving, which is the action of love, is never static, but ever growing. The more that is given, the more there is to give, the greater the happiness. Therefore God ordained from the beginning the giving of husband and wife to each other. In children are opportunities for further giving, for further happiness. Marriage, family, and society place us amid many opportunities for giving, that is, for happiness. That’s God’s design. That’s God’s happiness that He wants to share with us. All He asked of His creatures was that they should receive His gifts from Him, allow themselves to be given to, and find their happiness as He finds it in giving.

God alone gives the gift of a spouse. Husbands and wives should love and value the spouse God has given him or her. Where purity in marriage is maintained, man and wife will live together in love and harmony. One cherishes the other from the heart with complete faithfulness.

No one person is closer to a man or woman than their spouse. Our closest possession after our own bodies is the other body joined to us—our husband or wife. She is one flesh and blood with him, so one cannot inflict a higher injury upon him than to disgrace his wife. And no other torn relationship in humanity can top the devastation that husbands and wives can do to each other.

But that’s why God built a hedge around the most blessed estate of marriage. He spoke the 6<sup>th</sup> commandment. “You shall not commit adultery.” To which Luther explains that, “We should fear and love God so that we lead a sexually pure and decent life in what we say and do and husband and wife love and honor each other.” God instituted marriage first, before all other relationships. He created man and woman separately as the Scriptures say. He joined them together, not for lust, but that they might live together in marriage, be fruitful, bear children, and nourish and train them to honor God. So God willed that husbands and wives should raise up men and women who serve the world and promote the knowledge of God, godly living, and all virtues, and to fight against wickedness and the devil. Since God ordained marriage as man and wife, He encourages us to love and honor one another. Yes, in marriage you have a great many and precious good works to give and receive. And first among those gifts is God’s forgiveness.

But we ruin it all. We ruin God's happiness. We ruin our happiness in our proud refusal to be given to by God and our selfish refusal to give. When we twisted ourselves around from giving and set ourselves only to get, our happiness was destroyed. No more contentment. No more joy in the gifts and the giving. Now the fretful, coveting, grumbling restlessness of grasping, wanting, getting, and wanting consumes us.

We've made ourselves sinners. In sin, we've turned from God and giving to others to get what we want. We set ourselves against our spouse and neighbors to get what we want. Happiness is driven far away. But even more dismal is how we deal with God. We would not be given to by God. We would get it ourselves. So what comes from God is not a gift but what we've earned. We do the work. We claim the reward. We would transform the gracious, giving God into a spectator who should applaud our earned wages.

So God shows us what our wages are. If we refuse God's gifts and demand what He owes us, He'll tell us plainly. The Law sets forth what God requires. As for wages, if we keep the law, all right. But if we don't keep it perfectly, we are done with. If we want to be left to ourselves, then left to ourselves we will be. If we are unwilling to receive all as a gift from God and would claim our due, then we shall receive the wages we claim, which is being left to ourselves by God, which is hell.

God could have said, "They don't want my gifts. They don't want Me. All right, fine!" But instead of wrath's destruction, our sin drew from God higher and greater giving. St. Augustine audaciously exclaims, "O happy guilt that drew from God such a gift!" We made ourselves sinners, but He gave the promise that a Son born of woman would arise to rescue and restore to us God's happiness.

That promise is the whole point of the Old Testament and the heart of New Testament: The Lamb of God takes away the sin of the world by dying on the cross that our joy may be full. Christ desired to be present at the marriage in Cana of Galilee to show you that He had come to earth to celebrate His flesh and blood union with you. Greater is His love toward you than you could ever give. Consider His immeasurable love toward you: A love that brought Him from heaven to earth! A love that bound Him to the post to be scourged! A love that nailed Him to the cross! A love that left Him forsaken of God! A love that enclosed Him in the tomb! What led Him to suffer all this, if not a tender love for you!?

Jacob served 14 years to win Rachel for his wife; but Christ for nearly 30 years endured hunger, thirst, cold, poverty, shame, reproaches, bonds, the scourge, the vinegar and gall, and the awful death of the cross, that He might prepare you for Himself and win you as His own. Samson went down and sought a wife from among the Philistines, a people devoted to destruction, but the Son of God came down from heaven to choose you from among condemned men who devote themselves to eternal death.

By faith alone you are engrafted as a branch into Christ the Vine. You derive all your life and strength from Him. United in His death, you are no longer two, but one flesh that no man can rend asunder. You are united to Christ. Confidently take for yourself all the benefits of His redemption, even as a wife shines brilliantly in the glory that belongs to her husband. You are worthy to partake of the marriage feast of the Lamb which has no end. Amen.

The Peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen. ✠BJF✠