

Pastor T.C. Arnold
Epiphany 2
John 2:1-11
January 15th, 2017

At a wedding going on 22 years ago, one of the officials serving in the wedding party got very sick. The doctors came to the rescue and he managed to feel well enough to participate. At that same wedding, the ring bearer tried on his “rented from the tuxedo shop” pants and discovered they only came down to his knees. The shop came to the rescue and found a more suitable and presentable pair for the young lad. At that same wedding during the reception, the best man wanted to make a toast and begin the festivities, but no one was able to get the champagne bottles open. Turns out, they needed a sturdy tool like a knife rather than finger nails to break away the “metal” casing around the cork. A family member came to the rescue with the correct tool.

For a grand celebration such as a wedding, has anyone had to “come to the rescue” and save the day? These three “minor” incidents happened on June 10th, 1995 in Ste. Genevieve, Missouri at the Arnold/Thur wedding. If any of those three situations did not work out as planned (thankfully they did) the wedding would have still gone on and two people would have been joined in holy matrimony before the Lord’s altar that very day.

But the situation that Jesus, his mother, and his disciples found themselves in was different. You see, wine was more essential than a member of the wedding party, a pair of trousers for a ring bearer or a champagne at the reception. Wine was more than a drink. It was a cultural staple of the celebration connected directly the life and marriage of the couple. It was the very presence of “rejoicing” at a time-honored wedding celebration that meant more than fun. If the guests were to run out of wine, it was thought that the marriage was doomed. It would also bring great shame to the newly married couple, a stigma that would surely affect their marriage. Wine was more than “important.” It was vital.

And, so, here comes Jesus. Here comes the rescuer. He changes water into wine for the sake of the couple, for the sake of the guests... and... get this... for the sake of the world.

Here is what you must know about this first sign, as it says in the text, He performed to make His glory manifest. Nothing about this was an accident. Many times we have seen in the Scriptures how Jesus is the bridegroom and the church (you and me) is the bride. It’s no accident that His first sign came at a wedding. Jesus comes as the Messiah/bridegroom to this wedding— ready to join together with His bride. This is how He would show that He has come for us... He is joining with us in this the beginning of His public ministry... His Epiphany appearing. He comes to join with us... AND to bring about rejoicing. The rejoicing is the wine. The beginning of the fulfillment of all things begins with this “joyous” celebration. He shows us how this joining together – this marriage between God and His people – is filled with rejoicing. He is the bringer – the giver – of the “joy-wine” as He comes to meet His people.

One last thing... by way of explanation of what is going on in the Gospel text. We hear about the six stone water jars. These water jars were used for ritual purification. But there was no need for the ritual anymore. Jesus takes the water... the water by which He gives baptism... and turns the water into wine. We might think what Jesus is doing here is only referring to Holy Communion because the end result is wine. However, there is more. This is also baptism... and the clear message that baptism washes away our sins and that there is no more need for the ritual washings of purification under the Law. No, Jesus is the fulfillment of all of this – and this is the way He shows it to us. It’s so powerful and full of meaning, that we sometimes miss what Jesus is doing. But that’s us. We miss it. We, at

times, need to be remind. Sometimes we miss it out of ignorance – we just didn't know. Sometimes we miss it out of spite – because we don't want to see it.

What I mean is this. We may not have known all the little details that make up a very important narrative found in the Gospel text for today. But we do know... we are aware... that Jesus comes for us. That He came at Christmas, began His public ministry at His Baptism, died for us, and promises to come again. We know that. We know of His grace, His patience with sinners, His long suffering with us and for us when we suffer in daily living. We also know of His law. We know the Ten Commandments even if we can't get them in the right order all the time. We know it's wrong to lie, to steal, to speak poorly about someone or ruin their reputation. We know that there is a commandment called "remember the Sabbath Day by keeping it holy" even when the Chiefs are in the playoffs. We know, but we don't always care to know... to think about it... to change a behavior that goes directly against God's will.

Beloved, Jesus comes to His bride (the church) to redeem us who need redeeming. He comes and enters into a relationship with all Godly fidelity to you. Why do we treat the bridegroom like this? Why do we continue in these sins that affect our thoughts, our tongue, and our actions – that hurt ourselves and the ones we love. Repent, beloved in the Lord. Live as a purified bride of the bridegroom. You are not made pure because you can remain sinless. No, rather, because we have a sinless Lord who took your sin all the way to the cross for you.

Here's the joy for you today. Jesus comes to the wedding feast. He changes things. He brings joy to this marriage. And whether it be a wedding, like the wedding I described back in 1995, or a marriage between you and your bride – or you and your husband, the joy that is brought – Christ Himself – does not mean that hardship is supplanted by an easy life. It doesn't mean that if you believe hard enough that this relationship will never see suffering and difficulty. It doesn't mean – that because Jesus is a part of this marriage – because Jesus entered the marriage feast of the our lives – that we need not work at our relationships... that we need not worry about offering forgiveness to those we love... that we need not worry about the fact that troubled times need to be dealt with.

Some have said that 2016 was a difficult year. If we are honest with ourselves, we know that 2017 will have its moments as well. So, what do we do? We work to push through. We work, and don't ignore, the problems and the challenges. We meet them head on armed with the promise that our God is one who makes a grand entrance into this world and begins that blessed march to the cross showing us that He is the Lord who carries those difficult burdens for us. We work and we forgive. We work and we love. We work all the while having the one who came to the wedding feast, who professed everlasting Godly fidelity to us, who brings the miracle of joy with Him. At that great banquet in John 2 the joy was the wine. Today, for us, it's the water and the wine. It's His promise that He has made us His own in Baptism and that He gives us grace through His precious body and blood at Holy Communion.

Maybe Jesus could help out. Maybe Jesus could come to the rescue. It's not a "maybe," beloved in the Lord. It's a "Yes". And more than a "Yes" – It's always more than enough, just like the amount of wine at the wedding feast in Cana. So, while challenges continue in this sin-laden world, Jesus comes to provide the joy. Jesus comes to fulfill all things. Jesus comes to take your sins to the cross and die with them there. Strange that a brutal death on a cross truly is your comfort. But that's the way that God does it. He does it for you. Because He loves you so much. Come to the wedding feast. Jesus provided the joy of eternal life. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.