

Epiphany 2-January 16, 2022

Baltic and East Nidaros Lutheran Parish

John 2:1-11

“Jesus Changes Everything”

Sermon by Pastor Randall J. Questad

Grace and peace to you from God the Father and from his Son, Jesus Christ. Amen

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. This is the first of very few times that John in his gospel mentions Mary the mother of Jesus. John doesn't record any visit from Gabriel to Mary to announce the Messiah's birth. John doesn't include the story of when Jesus was 12 years old when he amazed the elders in the temple while Joseph and Mary were wondering where he had gone. John waits to make any mention of the mother of Jesus until she is joined by Jesus who is now fully grown and is just beginning his ministry and appears with his disciples at the wedding in Cana.

In this story of the wedding, John even mentions Mary's presence at the wedding before he informs us that Jesus and his disciples had also received invitations to attend this wedding and party. This wedding at Cana when Jesus turned the water into wine is often called the first sign that Jesus performed. This first sign as we will learn today has a clear connection to the last sign that John records that Jesus will perform. This first sign of Jesus happens early in the gospel of John, in the second of twenty-one chapters. The only events that John reveals to us about Jesus before the wedding is that Jesus is the Word of God that became flesh. John reveals that Jesus was baptized by John in the Jordan River and began taking on the sin of the world. John reveals that John the Baptist points his followers away from himself to Jesus who is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. John reveals to us that Jesus has called some of his first disciples. But John makes no mention of any other miracles of healing before he tells us what happens at the wedding in Cana. At this wedding, John reveals that it is Mary alone who knows something about Jesus that his newly called disciples or anyone else at the wedding do not yet know. Mary's unsolicited involvement at the wedding might give the impression that it is the goal of Jesus to simply make your life better. But Jesus changing the water into wine is the first of many signs that when Jesus reveals himself to you, Jesus is about to change everything.

At this early point in Jesus' ministry, it was only Mary who had the slightest idea of what having Emmanuel "God with Us" would mean. If the couple who invited Jesus to their wedding had some inkling about who Jesus really was, wouldn't they have wanted Jesus to perform the wedding ceremony? How cool would it be to have Jesus sign your marriage license? Usually when I am invited to a wedding reception, I am at least called on to give the blessing for the meal. Jesus wasn't even given this role. Jesus was just invited. But don't forget. Mary was there and she knew more about Jesus than anyone else.

John only mentions Jesus' mother Mary being present at the wedding. Biblical historians believe that Joseph, the father of Jesus, had already died. If Joseph had been at the wedding, it still likely would have been Mary who would have called on Jesus when she noticed that the wine had run out. We can't be sure if the chief steward was not doing his job and had no idea that the wine had run out or if Mary noticed a frantic look on the chief steward's face when he learned the wine was gone. In either event, no one from the wedding staff was taking any action to remedy the situation. It was Mary who after realizing the embarrassing miscalculation of wine being consumed at the wedding went to Jesus and said, "They have no wine."

What may seem like a disrespectful response from Jesus to his mother when he tells Mary, “Woman, this is not my problem, and it isn’t yours either.” is not the last time Jesus will call Mary, Woman. Even Mary did not yet understand what Jesus meant when he said, “My hour has not yet come.” Remember this was the first sign that Jesus performed. It was not his only or last and his last would be more than just a sign.

Mary takes charge of the matter in spite of Jesus saying it wasn’t their problem. She tells the servants to do whatever her son tells them to do. Mary doesn’t waste any time by getting permission from the chief steward who was in charge of the wedding and who also was likely responsible for the wine shortage. Mary notices that there is no wine. Mary doesn’t intervene earlier by noticing that the wine is starting to run out. Mary knows the best time for Jesus to reveal himself is when there is no wine. Mary calls on Jesus to perform his first sign by making an abundance where there was nothing to begin with. Jesus reveals himself by starting with nothing and turning it into an abundance. Jesus didn’t show up at the bedside of Lazarus when he was almost dead. He waited until Lazarus was completely dead and created a new life where there was none.

Jesus had the power to simply refill the containers that had been used for wine and command the jars to never be empty again. But instead, Jesus tells the servants to fill the six stone jars with water. These jars had been used for ritual purification. They were not for storing wine. They only were to have water in them. They were used to make people’s hands and the utensils that were used for preparing and eating meals clean. This rite of purification was a Jewish law that Jesus’ disciples were later going to be accused of breaking when the keepers of the law noticed them eating without washing their hands from water from these jars. This is another example in scripture when a miracle happens without Jesus giving a command. The change of water to wine had already happened when the servants were told to draw some out. All of this happened without the steward even knowing Jesus’ did the work. After the chief steward tasted the wine, he didn’t go to Jesus to thank him. He went to the bridegroom and coached him on the right order of serving good and inferior wine and commented that the bridegroom had done the opposite by keeping the good wine until last.

Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

When the disciples arrived at the wedding, they had little idea of who Jesus was. For some reason, when Jesus called his disciples by saying, “Follow me” they followed. But after going with Jesus to a wedding where there was no wine and witnessing his power to transform water into an abundance of new wine, they began to believe.

Water and wine. We can’t help but make the connection between what happened with these two common elements that transformed the wedding in Cana and the sacraments of our faith. These are the common elements along with God’s word are necessary in the sacraments that transform you. In your baptism, Jesus drowns away your sinful self and gives you his righteousness so that you will be changed forever. In the Lord’s supper we stand before Jesus just as Mary did when she saw him hanging on the cross. This was the second time that Jesus spoke to Mary as he did at the wedding in Cana when he said, “Woman, behold your son.” After Jesus had died, the soldiers took their spear and pierced the side of Jesus and at once, blood and water came out. Mary must have recalled the day when Jesus turned water into wine as she watched him complete his last sign.

Jesus turned water into wine at the Wedding in Cana. But Jesus has done more for you. Jesus has turned the signs of water and wine into sacraments. Sacraments that deliver to you the promise of the forgiveness of sins and the promise of eternal life. Through these sacraments, Jesus changes everything for you. Amen