

The Second Sunday after Epiphany
St. John 2:1-11: "Jesus Quietly Brings Joy out of Trouble."
January 16/17, 2021 | Saude, Jerico, & Redeemer Lutheran Churches

In Nomine Iesu

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We thank You, O Lord Jesus Christ, that You hallowed and adorned the holy estate of matrimony by Your presence, and we humbly ask You that You would continually preserve and bless this holy ordinance, protect us from impurity and offenses, and evermore dwell in all Christian homes, relieving all their necessities in Your own good time, O true God and faithful Friend of men, who, having power over all things, lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, now and forever. Amen. (*The Lutheran Liturgy*, p. 71)

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. (Rom. 1:7, etc.)

The sermon text for today is taken from the second chapter of the Gospel according to St. John. We read selected verses in Jesus' name:

On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus also was invited to the wedding with His disciples. When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to Him, "They have no wine." / And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does this have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come." / His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever He tells you." / Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. / And He said to them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast." So they took it. When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now." / This, the first of His signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested His glory. And His disciples believed in Him. ^(ESV)

These are Your words, heavenly Father. Sanctify us by Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen. (Joh. 17:17)

In Christ Jesus, who is aware of the troubles in our life and comes to help us through His Holy Word, dear fellow redeemed:

Some of you may have enjoyed the British historical drama, *Downton Abbey*, when it aired over the past decade. It was about an aristocratic family living in England around 100 years ago. But the story was just as much about this family's servants and attendants as it was about them. In going about their work, these servants were to act as though they saw nothing and heard nothing about the aristocratic family affairs. Of course, they were in the know about everything. In many respects, they were aware of more than the lord who oversaw the whole operation.

This scenario is true of many organizations. The employees that don't draw attention to themselves, the quiet ones, often know far more than they let on and far more than their superiors realize. We see this in the account of Jesus' first major sign. Jesus, His mother, and His

disciples were invited to a wedding. Naturally the main focus at the wedding would have been the bride and groom. The parents of the wedding couple also would have played a prominent role. And to some extent, so would the master of the feast who made sure everything ran smoothly.

The servants working at the wedding would have gone mostly unnoticed. Think of the weddings you have attended. The only time you are really aware of the banquet staff is if they make a major mistake like dropping something or getting way behind schedule. Usually the staff stays silent and anonymous, which is how they are trained to work. But while the guests are eating, drinking, and having a good time, it is the staff which is aware of potential problems.

Surely the servants at the wedding in Cana were aware that the supply of wine was rapidly diminishing. This must have made them anxious. For one thing, they didn't want to take the blame for something out of their control. And maybe they were anxious about how the bride and groom would take the news that their party was about to end. With the bridegroom in charge of the wine supply, how would he handle the shame? How would his bride handle it?

We can see a parallel between the trouble at this wedding and the troubles that married couples face today. The devil wants nothing more than to drain all love and joy from a marriage, especially a Christian marriage. He is willing to try every angle of attack. He tries to divide husband and wife through financial difficulties, health problems, or personality conflicts. He tries to ruin their trust for each other through pornography use or by tempting them to withhold marital relations for reasons of punishment or manipulation. He reminds them of the wrongs committed against them while urging them to forget the wrongs they have done.

There is trouble in every marriage. The couple that says they never had a serious fight in fifty or sixty years of marriage is either lying or is blissfully forgetful. Trouble in marriage started right when sin started. When God confronted Adam with his disobedience, Adam was quick to pass the blame to Eve, and then Eve passed the blame too (Gen. 3:11-13). That's what sin does to marriage. It makes us want to pass the blame and to be served instead of to serve.

And yet marriage remains one of the greatest gifts God has given mankind. Even if you are not married now or ever intend to be, you agree that marriage is a blessing. All of us are products of marriage, or we have been influenced in significant ways by married people. Marriage is as old as time. It promotes safety, security, and stability. It is the foundational institution on which everything in our society is built—family, workplace, government, and so on.

It is through marriage that God gives lifelong companionship. He calls a man and a woman to share one another's joys and sorrows, to carry each other's burdens, to encourage one another. He gives them the gift of physical union, and through sex, He often gives the blessing of children. Children can be a headache—they are sinners too just like their parents. But no legacy on earth lasts longer or is more treasured than the legacy of children and grandchildren.

Many hear this description today and say, "I can have all these things without marriage. Marriage is overrated. My parents had a terrible marriage, and I don't want to walk down that path." So they share a home with a significant other and share a bed and maybe even have children together. The difference between that and marriage is that marriage is about sacrifice

while co-habitation is driven by selfishness. Marriage is about giving my whole self and all that I have to another. Co-habitation is about holding some back, staying guarded, and walking away when the going gets tough.

So those of you who are married have a tall order. Not only are you supposed to make your marriage work, but your marriage also stands as an example for others. Like those servants anxiously waiting to see how the bride and groom would handle the lack of wine, there are many eyes watching to see how trouble is addressed in your marriage. Those might be the eyes of your children, your friends, your neighbors, or your co-workers.

What do they see when trouble comes? Do they see you treating one another with care and respect? Do they hear you speak well of one another and forgive each other's wrongs? Or do they see husband and wife pointing fingers, losing their temper, and speaking negatively about each other? We who are married would have to say it depends on the day or on the situation.

No marriage is perfect. Any of you who have been married can think of times you were not the spouse you should have been. You lost your temper. You spoke harshly. You gave the silent treatment. You accused instead of apologized. It all seemed so easy when you were making your vows to each other so many years ago. You were so much in love. But that love was soon tested, and you didn't always pass those tests with flying colors.

We don't know how the couple at Cana would have dealt with the wine shortage at their wedding banquet. In fact, as far as we know, they were never even aware of the trouble. Why? Because Jesus was there. Jesus told the servants to fill six large jars with water. Then He told them to take some to the master of the feast. Jesus had changed the water into wine, some of the best wine the master of the feast had ever tasted.

Jesus spared the bride and groom of embarrassment and trouble at this special occasion. He wanted them and their guests to have joy. If people want to know what Jesus thinks of marriage, here you go. He could have performed His first sign anywhere, and He chose to do it at a wedding celebration. He loves it when people get married. Marriage has His blessing.

We see how highly He thinks of marriage by the way His connection to His Church is described. St. Paul writes in his Letter to the Ephesians that *"Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish"* (5:25-27).

Of course this cleansing of sin applies not just to the married, but to all. Married, unmarried, widowed, or divorced—all of us have stains of sin on our past. We have not loved like we should. We have taken those closest to us for granted. We have put ourselves first. We have been jealous of the blessings and joys that others have.

God's Son took on flesh for you. He came to give Himself for an imperfect bride, to suffer and die not for His own wrongs but for the wrongs of the sinners He loved. He did not wait for you to earn His love. Even when you were opposed to Him, even when you were His enemy, He sacrificed Himself for you (Rom. 5).

Whatever your sins may be against your spouse or any others God has brought into your life, all those sins are washed away by the blood of Jesus. You may find it hard to forgive, but it is not hard for Him. Even before you ask for His forgiveness, already you are forgiven. God looks upon you with favor as though you have never sinned. Because you have been united with Jesus in Holy Baptism, you now stand before God *“holy and without blemish.”*

And Jesus is still here to help and save when you experience trouble in marriage or in life. He comes through His Word and Sacraments to help you serve better those whom He has placed in your life and to love more. You may face many struggles and difficulties in your marriage or your relationships with others close to you. You may feel like you are the only one trying and that the burden of making things work is too much.

Jesus promises to strengthen you even for this, to love even when love is not returned and to give of yourself even when it feels like you have nothing left to give. The troubles you face may seem overwhelming, and the people around you may agree. But Jesus knows how to turn tasteless water into delicious wine.

The servants at the wedding banquet watched **Jesus Quietly Bring Joy out of Trouble**, and He does the same for you. He comes through His Word with wonderful gifts for you. He comes to bring you His cleansing, His love, His holiness, and His life. Where Jesus does His saving work, then there is joy.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, forevermore. Amen.

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