

Second Sunday after Epiphany – January 20, 2012
Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church

Pastor Charles Heup

John 2:1-11 (NIV 84)

On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, 2) and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. 3) When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine." 4) "Dear woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My time has not yet come." 5) His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." 6) Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons. 7) Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim. 8) Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." They did so, 9) and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside 10) and said, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now." 11) **This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.**

Dear Friends in Christ:

I would imagine that the sermon text for today is one which is well known to most of us. It's a story which is taught in most Sunday Schools. It's often read in connection with a wedding. It is frequently used as a reading during the season of Epiphany. Perhaps you may have reviewed this lesson in preparation for your worship today. One way to study the Bible is to take a section of Scripture then read it, retell it and then relate it.

We've already read this section of Scripture and because this lesson is familiar to most of us I'm sure that we would find it quite easy to retell it to someone. Some of the important things we would mention would be the fact that Jesus and his mother and Jesus' disciples were guests at a wedding in Cana. We'd probably point out that the wedding customs at this time were different than today – back then the wedding celebration could last several days. We might also note that wine was used as a primary beverage and that when people were eating and drinking freely that the possibility of running out of wine would not be out of the ordinary. We could also talk about how embarrassing this would be for the newlyweds and their families. As we spoke about Mary coming to Jesus – we might point out that she seems to have some close connection with the couple – even the servants were willing to receive her instructions. Now when Mary spoke to Jesus about this embarrassing lack of wine -- Jesus politely addressed his mother with the word: Woman (a common expression) and then told her that if he would be providing any help it would be at the time appointed by his Father. When Jesus does respond to this problem – he does so in a very generous manner. He points the servants to the 30 gallon jugs which the Jews would have used for ceremonial washings of their hands, dishes, utensils, cups, pitchers, kettles and even their dining couches and even the feet of guests who traveled the dusty roads. Both the quality and the quantity of the water that was changed to wine revealed Jesus love and concern for the wedding couple. Retelling the story is fairly easy. But what about relating it to our lives?

As we seek to relate this story to our lives – we'd certainly want to take our cue from the last verse of this text which explains why this event occurred. Our text tells us that this first miracle occurred so Jesus could reveal his divine glory and that his disciple's faith was increased and confirmed by this miracle. We can use the idea that

Theme: Jesus Reveals His Divine Nature

1. **To encourage us to come to him with our needs**
2. **To assure us that he will help**
3. **To remind us that he will provide the best**

as a simple way to relate this story to our lives.

When we are looking for help we want someone who's readily available. Maybe something like this has happened to you. You were out shopping and all of a sudden a complete stranger asks you for advice about which product is the best one to buy. They asked for your advice simply because you were right there.

Mary had a problem and she shared her problem with Jesus at least in part because he was accessible to her. In the same way we can take our problems and cares directly to the Lord because he is accessible to us. **Call upon me in the day of trouble the Lord invites. (Matthew 11:28) "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." (John 16:24) Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.**

Jesus divine nature assures us that he is always with us even though we cannot see him. The Scriptures remind us (Acts 17:27) **God ... is not far from each one of us.** Mary spoke to Jesus when the wine ran out at a wedding. What is it that that you're running out of? Are you short on cash or food? Maybe you're short of time? Maybe you're running out of patience. Maybe you're lacking in health. Perhaps you have no friends... (James 5:13-16) **Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise. 14) Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. 15) And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. 16) Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.**

Whatever the problem or the situation, tell it to Jesus. He's at your side and ready to listen always. But it's not just that he's handy. He is uniquely qualified to help us. Jesus reveals his divine nature to assure us that he will help.

Mary didn't just go to Jesus because he was nearby. She went to him because she understood that he was able to help. She expressed her confidence in his willingness and ability to help as she spoke to the servants: **His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."** At the proper time **Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water;" so they filled them to the brim. 8) Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." They did so, 9) and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew.**

Jesus has shown us his power over nature with this miracle. It shouldn't surprise us that the one who created all things should be able to change water into wine. It assures us that Jesus is also able to handle our concerns and problems too. But how can we be confident that Jesus is willing to help us? The Scriptures assure us that **Jesus came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for us.** (cf. Mark 10:45) Listen to Jesus in (Matthew 7:7-11) **Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 8) For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. 9) "Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? 10) Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? 11) If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!**

The ultimate proof that Jesus will help us is found in the help which Jesus has already provided for us. Jesus has already given his life for us. Paul points to this sacrifice, which God made, and uses it to assure us of additional blessings from God.

- ♣ **(Romans 8:32) He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all--how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?**
- ♣ **(Romans 8:39) neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

Jesus' divine nature encourages us to come to him with our needs and assures us that he is able to help. Why is it that we seem to be lacking in our lives? The apostle James provides the answer: (James 4:2-3) **You want something but don't get it. ...You do not have, because you do not ask God. 3) When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.**

If we are lacking something in our lives there are really only two reasons. 1) We have not asked or 2) it is not in keeping with God's will. James points out our sinful selfish natures and reminds us that such selfish motives are wrong and sinful. (John 14:13-14) **And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. 14) You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.**

To ask in Jesus' name means to ask for those things which are in keeping with his will --to ask for what will give glory to the Father. It also means asking not for our sake but for Jesus sake, faithfully confessing that he is the one who has removed our sins and given us the right and the privilege to come to God with our requests. To ask in Jesus' name means emphasizing the spiritual and desiring to live as God's children. (Matthew 6:33) **But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.**

Not only does Jesus' divine nature encourage us to come and assure us of his desire to help, it also reminds us that he will give us the best. The water that was changed into wine was far superior to the wine which had been served previously. [The master of the banquet] **did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside 10) and said, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink (or have drunk freely); but you have saved the best till now."**

God has already given us more than we could ever ask or imagine by sending his son to rescue us from sin. (cf. Eph 3:20) He's given his best. And that assures us that he will not treat us as our sins deserve just as we read in (Psalm 103:10-17) **he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. 11) For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; 12) as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. 13) As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him; 14) for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust. 15) As for man, his days are like grass, he flourishes like a flower of the field; 16) the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more. 17) But from everlasting to everlasting the Lord's love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children's children—**

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How does this affect our lives? It fills us with the confidence to place our lives and our needs in the Lord's hands. To that end may we be more frequent and more faithful in prayer.

(Ephesians 6:18) **And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests... keep on praying for all the saints.** Pray for the spread of the Gospel. Pray with joy. Pray for the knowledge of God's will and spiritual understanding (Colossians 1:10-14) **in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, 11) being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully 12) giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. 13) For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, 14) in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.**

Pray continually. Amen.