

“Water into Wine and the Revelation of the Messiah”

John 2:1-11

Sermon for the Second Sunday after the Epiphany 2022

Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Rifle, Colorado

Rev. Charles Westby, Pastor

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So there was a wedding in the town of Cana in Galilee. With the wedding came a feast. The wedding feast was a festive celebration of marriage, and the marriage of the newlyweds in those days. Jesus’s mother was there. Jesus and His disciples were also invited.

The host of the wedding feast ran out of wine. Jesus’s mother advised Jesus of the fact. Apparently, she thought Jesus could do something about that problem for the host and the bride and the groom.

This prompted a response from Jesus. He says, literally: “What is this between me and you?” Since that does not read very well in English, we would say: “What does this have to do with me and you, with us?” We could even say this: “Just how is this any of our business?” And the main point is just how is it Jesus’s business that the host of this wedding feast had run out of wine.

Jesus emphasizes that by saying: “My hour has not yet come” (John 2:4). By referring to His hour Jesus is referring to His suffering and death on the cross and His resurrection that followed on the third day. John speaks of this later in his Gospel in chapter 12. There Jesus said, just days before His crucifixion:

The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. . . . Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? But for this purpose I came to this hour (John 12:24, 27 NASB).

The point is that Jesus knew who He was as the Savior and knew what His mission was. So, He could not let this concern raised by His mother get Him off track. It is like His mother was thinking: “My Son is the Son of God. How wonderful it would be for Him to use His power to make some wine for the host of this wedding feast. That would surely save the host the embarrassment of running out of wine and retain his reputation in the community. It also wouldn’t hurt to enhance Jesus’s and my reputation either.”

The fact is, however, that for Jesus to use His power and His purpose in the Kingdom of God just to provide wine for a wedding feast that had nothing to do with His mission would have been a misuse of His saving power as the Messiah. Jesus’s mother is mixing up the categories here. She was confusing the kingdom of this world with the kingdom of God, of which Jesus is the King. This is why Jesus responded to her the way He did. But then, Jesus used the occasion as an opportunity to show people who He is for the sake of recognizing Him as the Savior in the kingdom of God.

So let’s get to that. There were six jars made of stone standing there. Jesus told the servants at the feast to fill the jars up with water. They did so. Then He told them to draw from the jars and take what they had drawn to the master of the feast. They did so. What they drew out was wine. They poured water in. They drew wine out.

And this was very good wine. It drew high praise from the master of the feast, and a curious comment. His comment was that it is usually the case at a wedding feast that the host serves the good wine first. That way, after the people have drunk some, and, well, gotten a little

happy, they won't know that they are drinking inferior wine when the good wine runs out. So the master of the feast was a little surprised that he was drinking really good wine late in the feast.

This tells us that Jesus's brings the good wine. All that came before Him was inferior wine. It is like where it says in Hebrews nine that the blood of bulls and goats cannot atone for sin, but Jesus has by entering into God's presence itself with His own blood. He brings the good wine late in time.

Of course, the master of the feast did not know where the wine came from. He just thought that the bridegroom was holding it back, which is why he made this comment to the bridegroom. But the servants knew where it came from. The servants of Jesus know that the good wine comes from Jesus.

But what is the point of Jesus turning water into wine? The Apostle John tells us that Jesus did it for a sign. He says: "This is the first sign Jesus did in Cana of Galilee and He revealed or showed His glory, and His disciples believed in Him" (John 2:11).

There are three important things in what John says here: the sign; Jesus's glory; and the result, that is, His disciples believing in Him.

Jesus changing water into wine was a sign. As a sign it revealed or showed His glory. Thus, the sign shows that God is present for purposes of His salvation. A sign is not something that points to God being present and located somewhere else. A sign shows that God is present and active in His saving purpose in Jesus where the sign is taking place. Jesus was right there with the sign of His turning water into wine. And the sign of turning water into wine showed His glory. It revealed Him. So it showed who was present there. It showed that God was present in Jesus for His saving purpose.

Thus, Baptism is a sign of God being present in a special way for His saving purpose in Jesus. Holy Communion is a sign in the sense of Jesus being present in His body and blood here for His saving purpose. The bread that we bless in Holy Communion is not a sign of Jesus's body being somewhere else, of Jesus's absent body. It is a sign in the sense of Jesus's body being present here and now for us. And where Jesus's body is, there God the Son is, and so there God is.

What does this mean for you? It means that when you have the signs of the Gospel, Baptism and Holy Communion, you have God in Jesus present for you with His salvation.

Okay, now we get to Jesus's glory. This means two things. One thing involves Jesus Himself. What happened when water was changed into wine? The substance was changed. Or rather we should say that whatever makes wine beyond just mere water was brought into existence. That way, the water was no longer just water but wine.

But who can do such a thing? Who can change water's substance into wine, or create what makes wine out of nothing at will? Only God can. So, the sign showed Jesus glory as the only Son of the Father. It reveals Him as the Word made flesh, the Word that was God and by whom all things were made (John 1:1-3).

But there is more to this glory. This has to do with the sign being water changed into *wine*. Wine actually has much importance in the Bible. It was an important staple in the diet of the people of Israel. It was used by God in reference to things going either well or going badly in relationship to God.

So, wine was used by God to signify His wrath being poured out on the human race because of its arrogance and rebellion against God. In that respect, it relates to Jesus taking into Himself our sin and bearing in our place God's just wrath. That way, those who reject arrogance and rebellion can receive the grace of God in Jesus, because the price has been completely paid

by Jesus once and for all.

We saw this already when we heard Jesus speak about His hour: “And what shall I say, Father save Me from this hour? It is for this hour that I have come.” In Luke’s gospel when Jesus is in extreme anguish in the Garden on the night on which He was betrayed, He prayed: “Father, if it is Your will, remove this cup from Me; nevertheless not my will but Yours, be done” (Luke 22:42). What is in the cup Jesus must “drink”? The wine of the wrath of God.

And so in the words of institution of the New Covenant Jesus says: “Take, drink. This cup is the New Covenant in my blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.” The wine of the New Covenant takes away our sins and turns away the wrath of God. This is because it is the blood of Jesus Christ shed on the cross to obtain our forgiveness presented for us here. Complete satisfaction for all sin has been made by the Son. He delivers it now for you and I here in the cup of the New Covenant in which the blessed wine carries the atoning blood of Christ, according to Christ’s word.

But God also uses wine in the Scriptures to signify a very good thing in relationship to Him. This has to do with the promise of our ultimate salvation. It is the victory over death itself, which Jesus has won in the forgiveness of sins. The prophet Isaiah speaks of it like this:

The LORD of hosts will prepare a lavish banquet for all peoples on this mountain; A banquet of aged wine . . . *And* refined, aged wine. And on this mountain He will swallow up the covering which is over all peoples. Even the veil which is stretched over all nations. He will swallow up death for all time. And the Lord GOD will wipe tears away from all faces, And He will remove the reproach of His people from all the earth; For the LORD has spoken. And it will be said in that day, “Behold, this is our God for whom we have waited that He might save us. This is the LORD for whom we have waited; Let us rejoice and be glad in His salvation (Isa. 25:6-8 NASB).

When Jesus turned the water into wine, He not only showed His glory as the Son, but He showed His glory as the One in whom this promise from God to the human race is fulfilled and will come into reality for those who believe. He showed that He is the One for whom we have waited. The sign of turning water into wine showed that He has come, the Messiah, the Christ, the Savior of the world, and that He will accomplish the promised salvation from sin, death, and all evil.

And so the disciples saw the sign that He did and believed in Him. It brings to mind another passage from Isaiah having to do with wine and salvation:

[Hey]! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters; And you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy *wine* and milk Without money and without cost. . . . Incline your ear and come to Me. Listen, that you may live; And I will make an everlasting covenant with you, According to the faithful mercies shown to David. [Jesus was the son of Kind David.] Behold, I have made him a witness to the peoples, A leader and commander for the peoples. . . . Seek the Lord while He may be found; Call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. (Isa. 55:1, 3, 6-7 NASB).

And so they saw the sign Jesus did and believed in Him as the Savior, the one in whom the LORD is to be found, who has come with pardon and has the promise of salvation in His hand.

He comes to us here in His Word and in the signs of the New Covenant, bringing the

salvation He has won and His own presence with us. And so we too believe in Him and receive the salvation He has won. Amen.