

**Second Sunday after the Epiphany (c)**  
**Isaiah 62:1-5   1 Corinthians 12:1-11   John 2:1-11**  
**St. John's Lutheran Church, Grove City OH**  
**January 16, 2022 [Traditional]**

It's such a rich gospel lesson; so many angles to it. First of all, it's very significant that the first of Jesus' great signs, or miracles—turning water into wine—took place at a wedding. A man and a woman coming together in marriage, two becoming one flesh. Forgive me for going to the dark side first, but it kind of makes me think of what Jesus said about divorce later in his ministry; he really upset people with how uncompromising he was on this issue. He said "what God has joined together, let no one separate." So Jesus later uses the prevalence of broken marriages to point out how broken this world is, because divorces have always happened, people have always had difficult painful marriages. And Jesus is just highlighting the brokenness of the world when he points it out. He basically says, "God brings people together as one flesh, but as we all can see, the world is broken and the powers of sin and death are always tearing people apart." In fact especially in marriage, we see how a beautiful gift can become painful. If this foundation of human society—marriage—can be so commonly broken, then what does that say about human beings, what does it say about all our relationships? If the closest and deepest and most important (societally speaking) relationship can and does fail so regularly, what does that say about the world we're living in?

So it's no mistake that the first place Jesus goes in his public ministry, in today's reading, is to a wedding. Two people are coming together in that primal relationship, just like Adam and Eve, bone of each others' bones and flesh of each others' flesh. But what happens at this party? The wine runs out. Doesn't that just say it all?! God brings everybody together for something beautiful, for a celebration, but the wine runs out. The party can get *started*, but it can't *finish* right. The celebration cannot be completed. That's a great picture of the universe locked in sin, right there. God created us for a beautiful existence, a deep and rich relationship, and he has an even better ending in store for us. He has prepared this bright shining future for us, where we will know him face to face and rejoice in his presence, rejoice in each other's company at the great feast. And we're all born with the hope for that bright future, that God has put in us. We can't see that future, but we know it's there, we're always reaching for it. But there always seems to be this wall in front of us. As the song says, "I still haven't found what I'm looking for." That's humanity cut off from God. We reach for it, but the wine keeps running out. We can't get ourselves to the end we're looking for.

As believers, we know that it's sin cuts us off from that future. Sin has mysteriously derailed the original plan. The wine runs out. We're stuck high and dry in the middle of this broken cut off world, and we can't get ourselves to the future that God wants us to have. So now we see Jesus at this wedding. And when he changes that water into wine, he's showing us what he came to do for us. We can't finish the celebration God intends for us in this broken world, everything is always running out. We run out of time, resources, love, forgiveness, patience, faith; we run out of health. Everything dies. The wine runs out.

**We need an intervention.** We need God himself to provide us with what we need. We need him to give us the future. We can't get ourselves there. And that's exactly what Jesus shows us he's going to do for human beings, when he changes the water into wine at Cana. Suddenly the party can continue. The celebration can flow towards its beautiful, joyful conclusion. That's what Jesus has given you and me in our baptism into his death and resurrection. In Jesus, we now have that beautiful future that he created us for, with him.

What were we missing? We were missing God himself. We were missing out on that fundamental relationship. But now Jesus has given himself to us—God in the flesh. He gives us his Word, he gives us his body and blood in the bread and wine, he unites himself with us in baptism. That beautiful future that God intends for us: He gives it back to us in spades. It's his intervention in our lives; it's a pure gift. And now we can head towards the future with confidence; we know what we're here for, we know what our loving Father in heaven wants us to do (shine his light); we know that nothing can ever separate us from him.

All of life becomes an act of grateful worship, because we know that God has **saved** us. He doesn't just give us water to keep going in this life; in Jesus he changes it all into the wine of celebration. Notice how in the gospel lesson, the caterer is shocked that this is the best wine he's ever tasted, and it's being generously poured out at the end of the party. That's what we have in Jesus—we know the best is yet to come. We're not here to live from day to day just getting by until the clock winds down; we're living with this expectation that our Savior God is going to knock our socks off, more and more. As a believer, even when I'm on my death bed, I'm going to be expecting a greater beauty yet to come; and what my eyes will see when they close in death is only the beginning of the light and the power and the glory of what God is going to show me, and give me. Praise God, you and I are part of that now. We can live with that expectation and hope right now, because Jesus has completely poured himself out for us.

At the wedding in Cana, Jesus is showing us how the end of his earthly story—when he dies on the cross and rises on Easter—he's showing us how that victory where he wins the future for us—is going to flow back into our lives here on earth. Again, just for example, just think of Christian marriage. As Christian married couples, we're going to face all the same pains and frustrations and challenges that everyone other couple in the world faces. But praise God we're doing it with Jesus at the center of our marriages. We're not just couples, we're not just two people slogging our way through, getting counselling when we need it and hoping for the best. Praise God, we've got more than just enough water to help us make it from day to day, from one challenge to the next. What we've got, praise God, is nothing less than the blood of Christ, the wine of his victory that flows at the heart of our marriages. We mess up, we play our games with each other...whatever...but we know where to turn together on the best days and the worst. To the fountain of life. We depend on his forgiveness. We are humbled and grateful to him, together. The Father brings us together, the Spirit working through the blood of Jesus keeps us together.

And that's the way it is for everything else in our lives, too. Our families, our work, our friendships, in our lives as citizens of a nation. We look to Jesus to provide us with what we need to get to where God wants us to go. He's always turning our failures and our brokenness into his victory for us. By ourselves, in our sinfulness, we're always going to tend towards being at odds with each other. With Jesus in the center, we come together. What a gift, to be able to hand over all authority to him, and bow down together in gratitude towards him. That's where even the worst enemies can become reconciled.

Another thing I love about this gospel: it teaches me to stop always looking at what I lack in life. I don't know about you, but that's always such a temptation for me. As a pastor, I've even heard of instances where that attitude has taken over whole congregations of believers. It's like all I can see is I don't have. Not enough help. Not enough time. Not enough energy. It's just not the right people. Not the right time. We don't have the resources, and on and on. All we see is the wine running out. Of course that's all we'll see, if we think the outcome of everything depends on us. If it all depends on us, then "we're going to run out of wine" is an accurate assessment. We actually start thinking we're wise when we become naysayers. But Jesus in today's gospel shows us what he's doing in the background; we only need to have eyes to see it. He's always going to provide us with more than enough of the resources we need to do his will in the world today. He actually wants us to expect that from him. He will turn the water into wine. He'll turn our lack, our emptiness, our exhaustion, into fullness. He helps us see things in that new way, when we no longer hope in ourselves, but hope in him.

Praise Jesus, who turns death into life, sorrow into joy, who brings the future to us so that today, even when we're hurting, even when we're struggling, even when the wine runs out, even when it looks like "game over"—praise Jesus! We already have the final victory. We're already singing, "this is the feast of victory for our God." We've already joined in the celebration that has no end.