

**Second Sunday after the Epiphany  
Saint Dunstan's Episcopal Church, Houston, TX  
16 January 2022**

**John 2:1-11:  
Christ is the Very Personification of God's Abundant Generosity**

Let us start our sermon with few dad jokes, thanks to our friends on the Internet. "1. What did the grape say when the elephant stood on it? Nothing, it just let out a little wine. 2. I'm a wine enthusiast. The more wine I drink, the more enthusiastic I get. 3. I was having wine with my wife when she said, "I love you so much, I don't know how I could ever live without you." I said, "Is that you or the wine talking?" She said, "It's me talking to the wine." 4. How do you decide how much wine to drink? Take it on a case-by-case basis. 5. It's funny how 8 glasses of water a day seems impossible but 8 glasses of wine is a sign of a good meal. 6. The first thing on my bucket list? To fill the bucket with wine." I could go on, but why torture you any further?

I grew up around wine. In fact, I remember drinking wine at the dining room table since I was very young. For us in South America, wine is important and no celebration is even possible without plenteous amounts of the stuff. Unfortunately, most South American families cannot afford the Chilean and Argentinian wines found in some of the best restaurants in the world. Our wines are the garden variety table wines, mostly produced in small vineries or even at home. They are good wines, but they are not great wines. In fact, I remember many of these wines turning to vinegar if we left them out too long, or if we did not cork the bottle properly. So, today, when the reading from John describes the wine Jesus provides for this wedding as a wine of the finest quality, I am instantaneously drawn back to my childhood, and I wish I could have a taste of this Jesus wine. After becoming an expert in bad wine, I crave a taste of the good stuff. Before we get into this reading, however, let us set-up the stage.

This is Jesus first miracle in the Gospel of John, but we are given clues as to the significance of this miracle even before we get to chapter two. In John 1:14, the author tells us, "The Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth." John will demonstrate in his Gospel how Jesus is the full revelation of his Father's glory, and how he is full of grace and truth. No one has ever seen God, but those who walk with Jesus and have a relationship with Jesus have seen God's glory in the person of Jesus. For John, Jesus reveals the Father's glory to the world in incredible ways. This first miracle is an indication that God's amazing grace and truth is abundant and overflowing. There is a sense of extravagant abundance to God's generosity in this passage that tells us a great deal about how God in Christ is beginning something new in the lives of his people.

John starts his reading today by saying that on "the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there." If you remember Chapter one, we

know that Jesus has just called many of his disciples, including Nathanael, who is from Cana. So, presumably, Jesus and his disciples are already in the area and have been invited to this wedding. As you know, weddings at this time in Palestine are 7-day affairs, with many people coming and going as they are able. Usually, the expensive wine is consumed first and the cheap, inexpensive wine is consumed a few days later, “after the guests have become drunk.” It is the responsibility of the wedding planner or steward of the feast to coordinate and make sure there is enough wine for all guests for the seven days. Apparently, this wedding planner did not plan well and they ran out of wine. This, of course, would have caused a great embarrassment for the couple, their families, the steward and the groom’s closest friends, who are responsible for providing the food and drink for the feast.

John tells us that the mother of Jesus was also at the party. It is very interesting that in the Gospel of John the mother of Jesus is not mentioned by name, and she only appears in two places: here at this scene, at the very beginning of Jesus’ public ministry, and then later at the foot of the cross as she watches him die. She acts as book ends for the beginning and the end of Jesus’ earthly ministry. John tells us that she said to Jesus, “They have no wine.” And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.” I find this interaction very funny, because I remember calling my mother, “woman” sometimes. It would go something like this, “I can never make you happy, woman!” or “There you go again with your *cantaleta*, woman!” (*Cantaleta* is Spanish for nagging). It was not an act of disrespect, but rather a sign of intimacy. In fact, Jesus’ response denotes a bit of humor and closeness between him and Mary. We don’t know what Mary had seen in Jesus, but we know that she was convinced there was something he could do. By now, she had come to believe that this Jesus truly was filled with the Father’s glory and could act in wondrous ways. It is for this reason, that she humorously tells the attendants “Do whatever he tells you.”

This story is rich with symbolism and we could preach a number of sermons on it. For now, let us continue with the story. We are told that there were six jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each one containing between 20 and 30 gallons. And here we begin to see how Jesus reveals the Father’s glory in amazing abundance: Jesus orders that all the jars be filled with water, even though just one or two jars would have sufficed. In fact, they are to be filled “to the brim.” He then sends a sample to the steward, who did not know where this wine had come from. We are told that this was exceptionally good wine, perhaps the best the steward had ever tasted. Jesus provides wine of amazing quality and in great quantity. He provides wine of a quality that is above and beyond what would have been expected. This gesture “revealed his glory” and the disciples believed in him. This gesture tells us something about his identity and vocation: Identity in that Christ is the very impersonation of God’s abundant generosity. Vocation because radical generosity will ultimately lead him to a cross. Christ will go all the way. His love knows no bounds. Generosity is one of his main attributes.

In the gospel of John, the miracles of Jesus are not called miracles but “signs.” A sign is meant to point to another reality, hiding behind or beyond the sign. When you see a sign for the local hospital you know that the hospital is near, in a particular direction. The sign is not the hospital, but the sign points to the hospital. It is likewise with this sign in Cana of Galilee. This great act of generosity and grace is meant to point to a deeper reality. It is meant to direct us to a truth that lies beyond the actual sign. That truth is very simple: Jesus is creating something new in the midst of his people. Jesus is revealing a deeper truth about his Father, a truth we often forget or take for granted. This truth could be summarized in one sentence: God’s grace is extravagantly generous. God’s grace is truly amazing and overflowing. We are surrounded by God’s grace every single day. Every breath we take is a gift from the Lord. Every relationship we enter into is a blessing from the Lord. We are infinitely small and he is infinitely great and yet, he reveals his glory to us in amazing ways every day through his Son Jesus Christ and by the power of his Holy Spirit. Our response to his generosity is to open our eyes to see, our arms to receive, and our hearts to fully experience God’s blessings. In the same way the disciples saw Jesus reveal his glory and believed in him, we can see God’s revelation if we open our eyes and see Christ among us.

My friends, the greatest manifestation of God’s abundant grace came through the sacrifice of his son on the cross for our redemption. On the cross Jesus reveals his Father’s glory in a conclusive and definitive way: God is a generous God who will go through any extent to save sinners. God becomes flesh and dies for us that we may be freed from sin and death. This is the greatest story ever lived and ever told. The God who died for us is the same who converted water into wine and will convert wine into his blood in a few minutes. This is how much he loves us. He willingly becomes food and drink that we may be nourished and strengthened in our walk of faith. But we cannot see his glory here today unless we are willing to open our eyes and unless we are willing to become the type of people he wants us to become. Faith is more than intellectual assent. Faith requires commitment. When we open our eyes to see his glory, we become transformed people, by the power of the Holy Spirit acting in us.

I pray today that we will open our eyes to see God’s blessings all around us. We are covered by his glory. May he continue to bless us. Amen!