

Second Sunday After The Epiphany – Jantzen Michael

John 2:1-11

In this reading from the Gospel of John we find Jesus at a party. He is engaged in what seems to be a typical Jewish wedding celebration. Maybe Jesus, his mother, and the disciples are simply trying to teach us we need to party a little more, but I think there is more to be learned from this first sign. Throughout the Gospel of John Jesus is revealing his glory. This sign at the wedding is the first direct witness to the disciples that he may actually be who he says he is, the Son of God, the Messiah they have been waiting for.

We quickly learn in John 1, and the beginning of John 2, how Jesus built his community. We see Jesus use two methods; the first is directly calling those around him to follow him. The second is through the undeniable witness of the nature of God. The second method is what is displayed in the sign of turning water into wine. The pattern of revealing glory is what we see in all the signs and wonder of Jesus. There is a glimpse of glory to those around him. Jesus is producing a new community by his magnetic attraction to his incomparable being (1). The gospel of Jesus presented in this story is so compelling that disciples come simply because Jesus is Jesus.

The Messiah turning water into wine teaches us a few things about our Lord, and the community he is building, that can be seen throughout the whole gospel of John. This sign shows us the perfection of God's timing in his glory. It symbolizes Jesus being salvation and the greatest abundance. Jesus is the good news that brings gracious hospitality and humility. This text reveals the nature of Christ's generosity and humility, and provides a new way to worship that is better than before.

The text opens with *on the third day*, so I began to question, what was Jesus doing before this time? If you go back a chapter, we hear John the Baptist is making a way for Jesus, and later in chapter 1 Jesus calls his first disciples. They are already claiming Jesus to be the Messiah simply by his nature. By the time we get to the Gospel reading for today, all Jesus has done to his disciples is say he is the Lamb of God. He has not healed the sick, raised anyone from the dead, or been questioned by the Pharisees. Jesus has simply called unsuspecting people to join with him in his new community of believers.

We see that the Lord's actions are not a reaction to human influence. Jesus told his mother this was no concern to him. In verse four he says, *My time has not yet come* (NLT). In this, he is telling his mother and his disciples that his glory will not be fully revealed in this moment. We may not completely understand why Jesus does not have concern with the lack of wine, but still provides divine intervention, but we do see it as evidence of his compassion. The request of the human has influenced the revealing of his glory through his provision. Jesus's community is built on his provision over creation through his timing of the revelation of his sovereignty.

The text also teaches us that the wine Jesus brings is far better than that which came before him. When looking back into chapter one, John the Baptist tells the Pharisees he is making a path for One to come that is far better than he. The wine Jesus makes is far better than what was served before. This is symbolic of Jesus' being greater than all before and all to come. If you were to

continue to read John you would see newness of self that comes with baptism through the Holy Spirit. This newness is a witness to Christ and this symbolic newness begins when Jesus creates a new wine that is better than before. Jesus' community is better than anything that has come before.

Throughout John it is the disciples who continually believe in his glory. Only the servants who got the stone jars, the disciples, and his mother know what actually happened with the water that is now wine. Jesus did not boast and the wedding guests don't know what happened. To our knowledge the wedding host does not find out that Jesus changed the water to wine, and Jesus never says anything about it. The objective of this sign is to point beyond itself to what is being revealed. He does not boast of his works to gain attention from everyone; rather, Jesus is creating a community founded in humility that points toward salvation that is to come.

This text brings us a world (or party) in need, and the One who claims to bring abundance is the fulfillment of that need. Jesus is revealing that he is sufficient. In a world that lacks even water at times, Jesus goes beyond supplying just the needs—he provides the wants, the finest wine. John 2 teaches us that God has abundance (2). The passage of water into wine invites us to trust the generosity of God's new community and the abundance it has to offer. We may come to God with our observations, much like his mother did when bringing the concern of running out of wine, and question why Jesus isn't using his authority. Not only does he provide to meet the needs of the moment, he provides enough for the celebration to continue. The community of Christ is built on the extravagant generosity of his nature.

Jesus is also showing exceptional hospitality by providing wine for the wedding party. Running out of wine before the time would be a disgrace in the Jewish culture in which this story takes place. Without wine this wedding celebration was ruined. This would be a social disaster. With this disaster comes shame, fear, embarrassment, and someone must be blamed. For this type of festival with servants, it would have been the specific job of a servant to monitor how much wine was available. The servant in charge of this was now in a crisis; there is now no more wine less than halfway through the week of celebration. This would have been a social embarrassment to the family and a disaster for the servant who is about to reap the punishment. This servant could easily lose his job, or worse. By intervening and providing wine, Jesus and his mother are serving the servant (3). This could save the servant's job and potentially his life. This action that goes unnoticed elevates Jesus to his role of most gracious host. The community of God is a community that serves the least of these by its exceptional hospitality and observation of the marginalized.

The new community is also being built on Jesus' surpassing old Jewish purification rites. The six pots are representatives of old religious traditions that do not supply for the need. We learn that Jesus does not need the waters of purification because he is the embodiment of God, and the new wine he makes is above the old wine made with pure water. Jesus provides a religious reality that supersedes Jewish tradition. The stone pots are now filled with a new purpose. From holding ritual water to fine wine, these pots now provide for the needs of the guests. Jesus is allowing for a new way to worship—a way to connect to God that meets people where they are. It does not demand that one pay their way into the temple, be a certain heritage, skin color, gender, social class, or occupation. Jesus is omitting the stone jars of purification and setting a tone of releasing

old Jewish laws for a new way to worship. It is not that any one person deserves this new wine, but Jesus's mother insists her son perform this act that reimagines the use of the stone jars. The community of Christ is reevaluation of traditions that exclude the image of God, and inviting those to worship who have had barriers before.

Throughout this story we learn that Jesus is inviting us to be in his kingdom. We are called to come to the table through his glory. His divinity is captivating and his generosity is enough. Jesus is creating a new kingdom that breaks down the walls of tradition that separates us from authentic worship. He is greater than anything that has come before and he will be better than anything yet to come. We see Jesus with authority over creation and as embodiment of the Son of God. We learn that the mystery of Christ is unfolding and the Gospel is not what we predict.

In this season of Epiphany we wait. We wait for God to reveal himself. This gospel message is an epiphany because it is beginning to reveal the glory of God. Jesus could have decided to be bold with this sign, to make sure everyone at the party knew he was the awaited Messiah, but he didn't. He always seems to arrive and act in a way that is different than our expectations. This sign is simply turning scarcity into plenty. God is uplifting the least of these and creating a platform that can magnify his glory.

So what does this text tell us as a community of Christ? Since I don't think any of us can change water into wine or have seven-day wedding parties, I think this text is inviting us to be a church of humility and hospitality—a church that looks to the Lord's provision and a church that is not afraid to say, "We have run out of wine, can you provide?" Jesus is teaching us to consider the servant, who may be at fault, but is extended life-saving grace nonetheless. We are to be a people, a church, a community that does not limit worship for sake of keeping the stone jars of purification clean. We are to be a people that builds Christ's new and abundant community. There is enough wine for everyone. Amen.