

*In Nomine Jesu*

## Jesus Celebrates Marriage

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.  
Amen.

Every once in a while God gives us some nice signs to which we are supposed to pay attention. Sometimes, He gives us quiet whispers that we have to struggle to hear. Then there are the times when He gives us great big flashing neon signs that are impossible to miss. Take, for example, our Gospel reading for today.

As many of you know, I recently returned from the National LCMS-U Campus Ministry Conference. The theme for this conference was “Taboo” and it was centered on the topic of human sexuality. When I came back from that and started working on this sermon, I saw that our Gospel reading for today was the wedding at Cana. It would appear that God is giving us a flashing neon sign about what I’m supposed to be talking about today. With that in mind, let’s dig into this text:

*And the third day there occurred a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there, and also Jesus and the disciples of Him were invited into the wedding.<sup>1</sup>*

We don’t really know for sure why Jesus, His disciples and Mary were invited to this wedding, and it’s not all that important. Let’s talk a little bit about Jewish weddings though. They were rather large events, larger than most weddings today. They would often last for days on end. It was the bridegroom’s job to make sure that said days-long party was well supplied and went off without a hitch. (Again this is much different from today, where it seems to be the bride’s or some wedding planner’s job to make sure everything goes off well.) Unfortunately this wedding had a little problem, which we hear about as our reading continues.

*And they were wanting of wine, the mother of Jesus said to Him, “They have not wine.”<sup>2</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> John 2:1-2

I'm not sure that I can imagine how embarrassing it would be to run out of wine at your own wedding. I'm betting that it would be pretty high on your most embarrassing moments list though. In fact, it was so bad, that Mary feels the need to do something about it. She brings the problem to the attention of her Son, who is also the Creator of grapes and therefore wine. But notice that she doesn't actually ask anything of Him.

Mary sees a need and she knows that Jesus can fulfill it. However, she doesn't come to Jesus with a step-by-step plan. She doesn't ask Him to send His disciples to go buy more wine, or anything like that. She simply states the need. This is a solid example of how you are free to pray. Tell God the problem then let Him worry about the details. However, Jesus responds in an interesting manner to His mother.

*And Jesus said to her, "What with Me and you Woman? Not yet is it My hour."*<sup>3</sup>

First off, let's remember that to call a woman a woman in Jesus' time was not an insult. Despite this, His response does seem a little bit short doesn't it? Why would Jesus act this way? To answer this question, I would point to another time when Jesus responded somewhat shortly to a woman.

This time He was speaking to a Canaanite woman, who was requesting that He free her daughter from a demon. He doesn't even respond to this woman until His disciples beg Him to send her away. He finally says to her, "*It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.*"<sup>4</sup> Again this seems like an odd, almost insulting, response from Jesus, her Savior. He is of course trying to make a point. We hear the point He is making in both the response of this woman, and the response of Mary at the wedding in Cana.

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<sup>2</sup> John 2:3

<sup>3</sup> John 2:4

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 15:26 (ESV)

*The mother of Him said to the deacons, “Whatever he says to you do that.”<sup>5</sup>*

What does Mary do after she is rebuffed by Jesus? She trusts in Him. What did the Canaanite woman do when she was rebuffed by Jesus? She responded with what Jesus called great faith. Both Mary’s response and the Canaanite woman’s response, which we will hear about on the Second Sunday in Lent, show their Faith in Jesus. Jesus seemingly brushing these women off, gives them a chance to show their Faith. They get to show that Faith can thrive even in the face of Jesus masking His grace.

Mary didn’t get upset that her Son had brushed her off. She just went ahead believing that Jesus would take care of the need. She provides us yet another excellent example of how to pray. When you pray to God and have told Him the problem, you’re able to move forward assuming that God is going to take care of that problem. Jesus certainly takes care of this wedding’s need as we continue through our reading.

*And there were stone water pots, six according to the appointing of the cleansing of the Jews, holding between two measures or three. Jesus said to them, “Fill the water pots with water and fill them up.” And He said to them, “Then draw some and carry it to the table master.” And they carried it<sup>6</sup>*

Part of John’s style that you hear in his writing is that he loves to hint at things and he loves to repeat things. I’m just going to point out a few interesting hints, and I’ll let you come to your own conclusions about them.

First, notice that He fills Jewish cleansing pots with water. In case you’re wondering what the Jews normally did with the water in these cleansing pots, they used them to wash things. Or to use the actual Greek word, they βαπτίζομαι things.

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<sup>5</sup> John 2:5

<sup>6</sup> John 2:6-8

Also notice that Jesus doesn't physically say or do anything here, other than give the Deacons instructions. He does not touch the water. He does not speak over the water. For all we know, He might not even see the water. All He does, is give them His word to enact. And so they do it.

*And as the table master tasted the water, having become wine, and not knowing where it had come from (but the deacons knew, the ones drawing the water) calling the bridegroom, the table master said to him, "All men first place the good wine and when it is drunk the lesser. You guarded the good wine until now."<sup>7</sup>*

Notice the subtlety of this miracle. There isn't any specific moment when the water becomes wine. Also notice, that only Mary, the disciples, and the deacons knew what had happened. Jesus was being more than a little bit sneaky here. After all, His time had not yet come, so He didn't want to openly do miracles yet.

But something was important enough that He did this miracle before His time had come. To a certain extent, His mother's intercession was important. But remember that His mother was concerned about the wedding. So while it is important to make your mother happy, Jesus' concern also appears to be the marriage.

A marriage was important enough for Jesus to change water into wine. If you're wondering about the wine by the way, don't worry I'll get to it. But first we should talk about this fact from our reading.

*This He did, the first of the signs of Jesus in Cana in Galilee and He manifested the glory of Him and the disciples of Him believed in Him.<sup>8</sup>*

This was Jesus' first miracle. This was the first time that He manifested His glory. This was the first time the disciples as a whole were stated as believing in

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<sup>7</sup> John 2:9-10

<sup>8</sup> John 2:11

Him. And all of this happened at a wedding. You are free to hear this and come to the conclusion that there must be something special about marriage if a wedding is the setting that Jesus used for all these things.

Jesus did not just randomly decide to perform His miracle at a wedding. He did not manifest His glory for the first time “off the cuff.” By Jesus doing this, He is affirming the institution of marriage which He set up all the way back at the creation of Man. Just to be clear, marriage at the time of Jesus was always between one man and one woman. So if He had been affirming any other kind of marriage He would have had to say so. And seeing as Jesus never affirms homosexuality or polygamy in any way, this means that here Jesus is only affirming heterosexual monogamous marriage.

Unfortunately there are many ways that the institution of marriage has been twisted in our time. And I’m not just talking about homosexuality. I’m also talking about living together before marriage; sleeping with each other before marriage; cheating on your husband or wife; abortion; even divorce (except in the case of infidelity.) All of these are sins, and if you have committed these sins and not repented and sought forgiveness, then you are living in sin, which is not a good thing.

But know this: none of those sins are unforgivable. Jesus died in order that all sins could be forgiven, and that certainly includes all ways that marriage can get twisted. God will forgive you if you have committed any of these sins. In fact, he already has. Return to your baptism; believe the Word of Holy Absolution that you just heard a few minutes ago.

Now let me apologize on behalf of pastors and vicars everywhere, because unfortunately many of us gone silent on these issues. We have allowed these issues to become taboo in the church, and that is a failure on our part. Thank God He died to forgive us, too. We are free to preach His Truth and to apply it to ourselves.

However, it certainly is not too late to repent of our silence. So, if you are struggling with any kind of sin please feel free to speak to Pastor or me about it. We are here to help you through those struggles with sin. We are here to tell you that God has not abandoned you to them. He has not left you alone to struggle by yourself. If you are struggling with homosexuality, pornography, adultery, or any other kind of sin, know that you are not alone. God is still with you, and even Christians struggle with these temptations and sins, just like all Christians struggle with our original sin.

Let's change tracks now and head back to our Gospel reading for today. Let's talk about wine. I will again leave it to you to draw your own conclusions about how at a feast with religious implications Jesus supplied the wine. And about how He brought the deacons from a cleansing water to a revitalizing drink. I'm leaving that to you, in your own studies guided by the Word, because I want to talk about the fact that Jesus here isn't just affirming marriage. He is celebrating it.

Let me say this again, Jesus supplies the wine for this wedding. He wants the people to be happy. He wants them to enjoy what's going on. He wants them to be joyful. On a side note, Jesus also shows that it is okay to drink alcohol especially if you're celebrating something like a marriage. (Of course that doesn't mean that it's okay to get drunk.)

Marriage is a thing to be celebrated, and the reason for that is this: marriage symbolizes the relationship between Jesus and the Church. Jesus is the Bridegroom. The Church is the Bride. I know it can be difficult for the men to picture themselves as the bride, but please bear with me. After all the women have to deal with being a part of *mankind* all the time.

The reason that marriage is so important is because it gives us a picture of what our relationship with Jesus is supposed to be like. Everything in marriage is designed to show us how we are supposed to relate to Jesus. Jesus is the Husband; the Church is the Wife. Jesus is the Head of the Church. The husband is the head of

the wife. The church is supposed to voluntarily submit to Jesus, the wife is supposed to voluntarily submit to the husband as he follows Jesus. Jesus died for the church. The husband must be ready to die for his wife to keep her in the Faith.

This is a glorious relationship, and one that we get to celebrate. When Jesus turned the water into wine at the wedding in Cana, He affirmed the institution of marriage. He showed us that it is important. That it is something worth talking about, and something worth holding sacred. As we go out from this place into a world that is trying to twist marriage into something that is sinful, feel free to think about this text. Think about the miracle that Jesus performed here. See in marriage the blessings that Jesus has given us in Himself.

Now may the peace which passes all understanding, and which comes from Jesus' marriage to the Church, guard your hearts and your minds in Jesus Christ. Amen.

Epiphany II

January 18, 2015

Psalm 111: 1-10; Amos 9:11-15; Romans 12:6-16; John 2:1-11

*Vicar Christopher M. Craig*

*Soli Deo Gloria*