

The Second Sunday after Epiphany  
19 January, Anno Domini 2020  
St. John 2:1-11  
Pastor Kurt Ulmer

In the Name of the Father, and of the +Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

The season of Epiphany is the season of revelation - showing us who Jesus is and what He has come to do for us. And today it is revealed to us that Jesus is...rude to His mother. Or at least that's how it seems. It's hard not to be taken aback hearing our Lord call His mother "Woman" and then essentially say "Not my problem." Of course, our Lord is not breaking the Fourth Commandment and our understanding of His words and actions can't be merely knee-jerk responses. Something else has to be going on here and there most certainly is.

We've hear of Jesus doing something similar at another time, when the poor Canaanite woman came and pleaded with Him to heal her demon-possessed daughter (Matthew 15). What was Jesus' initial response then - silence. And I would venture to say that most of you here have had a similar experience in the midst of your own afflictions and needs. You find yourself in need of help and when you make your requests known to God He seems to turn a blind eye and pretend like He didn't hear you or as though your problems aren't any of His concern.

Is there anything worse, anything more painful than thinking that God doesn't care? What will you do when the one last place of help turns you down or even seems to set Himself against you? Where else can your heart and mind go than deep into the pit of despair? Moses is another who struggled with this same fear. "God, if you aren't going to go with me and with us, then there's no point in going anywhere because if you don't, we're doomed. I don't understand what you're doing." And, frankly, Moses had good reason to be terrified. God had just said "I'm not going to go with you into the Promised Land because I will consume Israel on account of their pride and arrogance and rebellion. Instead, I'll just send an angel with you." Then again, the Israelites had just made the golden calf and worshipped it, crediting it with bringing them out of Egypt.

In all these instances, and by extension, your own, the Lord God is doing a marvelous and necessary work for His children. He is bringing you to see the root of the problem and your real need. He is removing and vanity or pride. He is rooting out the idols that we build in our hearts. In one of his sermons on this text,

the Blessed Dr. Luther said “Whoever still deems himself wise, strong and pious, and finds something good in himself, and is not yet a poor, miserable, sick sinner and fool, the same cannot come to Christ the Lord, nor receive his grace.” We may think we rely on Christ. We may think that our trust is in Him. We can confess “I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my senses, and still takes care of them.” But, do we really trust God? Does our heart rest in Him alone? Do we believe not only that He CAN help but that He WILL help? He knows the true answer to that question, even if we won’t admit it.

We certainly don’t trust God as we should. Maybe we trust when things are going well and God appears to be following along with our plan (then again, we’re probably just trusting in ourselves). But when the seas get choppy, when we meet resistance or pain or persecution, when our plans and our ideas get tossed out the window, when we can’t have the things that we are absolutely convinced we need, the truth comes to light that our faith isn’t perhaps as deep and unwavering as we thought. When we cry out to God and He seems to rebuff us or ignore us all together, the frailty of our faith becomes clear as we kick and fight like the horse and the mule who have no understanding and no trust in their driver (Psalm 32). We quickly begin to assume that God isn’t actually gracious and that He doesn’t actually care about us.

Repent. The Word of the Lord endures forever. When He says that He will hear and answer, that is exactly what He will do. In those times, when Jesus seems to be saying to us “What does that have to do with me”, He is drawing you and challenging your trust in Him. He is saying “What do you really cling to? Are my promises enough for you or does your heart actually desire comfort and ease above all else? Do you trust me because of my Word or because you have what you want? Will you cling to the mercy that has been revealed to you? Will you take your stand on my kind and gracious nature and the promises I have made to you in Baptism? Will you trust that no matter what I may appear to be doing (or not doing), my good and gracious will for you will be done, even when it seems that I’m the one who is set against you? You can. I am not other than I have promised. You can’t see my glory but you have beheld my mercy and I will not turn that away from you.”

One has to ask why Mary went to Jesus in the first place? Likewise, why do you pray? Luther suggests that Mary was actually the one arranging the wedding the feast which is why she knows and is concerned about the wine issue in the first place. In such situations, when a need arises, we typically start looking around

trying to solve the problem on our own. Perhaps we're a little confused about why Mary bothered Jesus with the problem. He's a guest, after all. This is such a trivial matter, something that the one who has come to save the world from sin and death, surely doesn't care about or have time for. But true faith doesn't distinguish between more and less important needs. True faith doesn't arrogantly try to determine what God cares about. Instead, because God has simply said "Call upon me in the day of trouble and I will answer you", faith calls out. Faith immediately looks to Christ because Christ has revealed Himself as our help in every time of need - from empty wine glasses to the forgiveness of all your sins. Christ is merciful and compassionate. Whatever good we have comes first and only from Him.

Mary asked because she believed Jesus cared and would help. And even when it seemed like He was rebuking her and turning her down, she wouldn't be convinced of anything other than what she knew - that He does care and He will help. How and what is best is up to the Lord because He knows these things. But faith clings to God's promise to hear and answer. That's why Mary after Jesus turned her down, still went to the servants and said "Do whatever He tells you." She wouldn't let a seemingly harsh response convince her of anything else about her Lord. He will help. He does care. It's that simple. Mary wasn't banking on the fact that Jesus was her son, but that He was her gracious Lord and Savior - the very same thing that should give you confidence to let your requests be made known to God. God Himself has told you that you are His child and that He cares for you. Nothing in heaven and on earth should convince you otherwise, not for a single second.

Jesus did help. He provided. Mary's faith was vindicated as will the faith of all who dare to trust in this Jesus of Nazareth. And not only did He help, He provided an abundance of the very best. But there first had to be a lack. Neither the groom, nor the master of the feast, nor the mother of our Lord were able to provide. But Jesus can and Jesus does. And you can be assured that no matter what Jesus provides it is what is good and necessary. There is no need you have that the Lord will not see you through because you belong to Him. He has offered His Body and Blood to save you and gives them to you to assure you again of His promise and His faithfulness. God promised Adam and Eve a Messiah and He delivered. He has promised you salvation and daily bread and He will deliver.

When you have need, call upon the Lord, not as a last ditch effort, not with the uncertainty of whether or not He will give you something good or bad. Rather as soon as you have any need boldly go to your heavenly Father and make your need

known with full confidence that He will give and what He gives is good because He loves you. Don't doubt what the cross tells you. Don't doubt what God promised in Baptism. You have need. You have a Savior. He is filled with mercy and compassion and help. This is what He has revealed to you and this is how He wants you to know Him.

In the Name of +Jesus.