

The Second Sunday after Epiphany  
17 January, Anno Domini 2021  
St. John 2:1-11  
Pastor Kurt Ulmer

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

A very marvelous thing is revealed to us today in John's Gospel. It is a simple but profound truth - God cares about your needs. He cares about you. He hears your prayers, your cries for help, and He answers them. It doesn't matter how unimportant you think they are. Whether it is the need for more wine at a wedding feast to avoid embarrassment, the desperate cry of a mother for her sick child, or the pleading of the penitent sinner whose guilty conscience has dragged him into the darkest pits of despair. Believe what you see done in Cana - the Lord Jesus, the Son who perfectly reflects the will of the Father, helps in times of need.

Very plainly, Jesus says to Mary, "What does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come." And yet, Jesus helps. No, changing water into wine is not the point of His incarnation. He didn't descend from heaven for the purpose of performing miracles and proving that He is divine. But He is the Lord who created you. He is the Lord who preserves your going out and your coming in. He has numbered the hairs on your head and knows when a single sparrow has fallen to the ground anywhere in His whole creation. The dilemma at the wedding had to do with Jesus because there was need. In Psalm 50 God couldn't be more clear about His command and promise. He says "Call upon Me in the day of trouble and I will answer you." (Pslm 50:15)

Why don't you? Why do you hesitate to call upon God in the day of your trouble? It's because our hearts are filled with doubt. We hear God say "I will hear your prayers" but we think that maybe He's lying or maybe He's only talking to good people. Or maybe we buy into the age-old lie that God only helps those who help themselves. Maybe we think prayer is only for the weak who can't take care of things themselves. Maybe we don't pray because we don't actually believe that there is anyone to pray to, anyone to hear and help. It's all the same. Whatever excuse we make it is all unbelief. That our first response to need ISN'T prayer betrays the fact that we doubt the promises of God in Christ. Repent.

In the Second Commandment God teaches us that asking for His help in all things is the way that we use His Name rightly. That's why He has given you His Name - to pray. He is the Father, the source of every good and perfect gift, our only help

in every time of need, the deliverer of all who trust in Him. Your prayer should stem from who He is, not from who you are or aren't. When you pray you glorify His Name by confessing that you believe He is who He says He is and will do all that He has promised to do. You confess not only His power and ability to help, but His will and desire to help. You also confess that apart from Him you can have or do no good thing. And perhaps the other reason we are reluctant to pray. We don't want to have to admit that. We don't want to have to admit that we are weak and evil.

And this is why your merciful Lord lets you experience and even brings you in to times of need. Unless you know just how weak and powerless and vulnerable you are, you will despise Him, you will think that you have no use or need for Him and you will perish forever because you idolized your self or something else. But there is no other God and there is no other help. 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." Grace and mercy and help are sought by those who are honest with themselves and will admit the truth that they are helpless. And it is to these that God makes Himself known. To these, the cross is not weak or offensive, it is the most profound beauty and source of comfort because the cross is the final and eternal yes to our greatest need - deliverance from the death and the eternal punishment of our sin.

And that is exactly what God would have you ask for along with everything else. When the Son of God breathed His last and said "It is finished", God declared before the whole world His promise to hear our cries for deliverance and grant them. And if He didn't withhold His only-begotten Son from us poor sinners in order to grant us deliverance from our sin, you can be absolutely certain that He will hear your prayers about wine for parties, sick children, struggling marriages, broken down cars, your temptations, and help on a test.

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 revealed in my Word 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? 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."

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. Faith doesn't try to know more about God than what is revealed in Jesus Christ. 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. Even His harshness is good. 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, whether you think it is big or small, boldly go to your heavenly Father and make your need known with full confidence that He will give and that 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. Let your needs and petitions rise before God as sweet smelling incense day and night because your God hears you and will answer you and deliver you from all your troubles.

In the Name of +Jesus.