

The Second Sunday after the Epiphany

19 January, Anno Domini 2025

St. John 2:1-11

Saints of God,

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

This Gospel is absolutely stuffed full of rich and beautiful theology. Here we learn about the true glory and character of God, faith and prayer, Law and Gospel, the personal union of God and man in Jesus Christ. There is just too much for us to cover in the short time we have today. I encourage you in your own study this week to meditate on these few short verses. It will be time well spent. May our Lord, by the power of His Holy Spirit, open our ears to hear, our eyes to see, and our hearts to believe the truth of God's glory revealed today by St. John.

It would be easy to think that this miracle of Jesus was only special because it was the first. But it is so much more than that when you look at the text in the Greek. John uses a word that doesn't just mean first chronologically but also foundational or chief. It may not be as exciting as raising someone from the dead or casting demons into a herd of pigs. Yet it is THE miracle that defines the rest because at the wedding of Cana we see in Jesus a God who not only helps those in need but a God who pours out His help with an absurd abundance. John is equally clear on that point. The wine had already been flowing freely at this party. The guests had blown through the best the groom had to offer AND the cheap stuff.

Now, if Jesus were really pious, he would have left such an out-of-control party in righteous indignation. His response to his mother should have gone something like this "Woman, do you see how these people have lost control of themselves? Look at how much they have drunk! I should strike them all tomorrow with the most splitting hangover they've ever known. And you have the gall to ask me to give them more?!"

At first it sounds like this is exactly what Jesus is going to say. He seems to chastise Mary. But the question Jesus responds with gets at the very heart of everything Jesus has come to do. What Jesus actually says is "Woman, what cause do we have in common? It is not yet my hour." This seems like one of those trivial things that Jesus can't be bothered with. He has begun His public ministry and has begun His three-year journey to Calvary's cross. Seriously, Mary. More wine?

But the plight of sinners is exactly what Jesus has in common with us all. We all suffer under the load of our guilt and shame. We all have come up far short of God's demand of perfect love of Him and our neighbor. From the youngest to the oldest among us, we are confronted with the terrible reality that we deserve God to turn away from us, to ignore our need, to let us wallow in the consequences of the choices we have made. What did the Son of God have in common with Mary, what does He have in common with us - our flesh, our temptation, and by His baptism, our sin. And He shares these things with us to save us from them.

And so more wine is exactly what Jesus gives. Not just a little cheap stuff to get people through the rest of the party. The true bridegroom knows only one way to provide for His bride - abundantly and with nothing less than the very best. Jesus gives 180 gallons, that's 900 bottles, of the best wine anyone has ever tasted to people who won't likely appreciate it, who won't give thanks for it, who will probably never even care.

This is who God is. This is His glory - His abundant mercy for those who don't deserve it. Lavishing His love in ways and on people that defy all reason. God loved us while we were yet sinners, drunk with anger, lust, selfishness, hateful words, and disdain for God and His Word. God didn't choose to save us because He was impressed with us. He didn't lay claim to you because you were special or more deserving. He helps and saves because He loves.

This God offers up the atoning blood of His only Son because that is His will for

you - to save the lost, the dying, the hopeless, the addicted, the murderer, the depressed, the self-righteous. This God washes away the sin of infants who don't have either the mental or physical capacity to seek out such a gift. He offers His Body and Blood for healing to those caught in their sin, who struggle to believe, whose flesh can barely get out of bed in the morning let alone decide to cast off all doubt and weakness and live a life filled with joy and energy and purpose. In this Christian Church, filled with the saints whose cry for help and aid against the devil's relentless assaults ceaselessly ascends before heaven's high throne, our Heavenly Father daily and richly forgives your sins and the sins of all believers. He hears your prayers because He has made you His children and the only thing He knows how to give His children is good gifts. Like the wine of Cana, Jesus pours out to you His mercy and help in super-abundance, before you every thought to ask for it and certainly without you meriting it. He provides you with food, with clothing, with work, with family and friends, good government, good weather all because He is merciful. He loves to help the fatherless and the widow. He loves to bless the unblessable. He loves to forgive the unforgivable.

Is there anything that we more deeply crave than help in this out-of-control, broken, and messed up life; forgiveness for our constant loveless and selfish lives? What more reason could we have to pray than our unending need for help? Need is what drove Mary's prayer. She was rebuffed at first, but she wouldn't yield and remained firmly believing in the goodness and mercy of her Lord and Son. It is this overflowing goodness that draws the sinner to font and altar, seeking mercy wherever the Lord has willed it to be. Here that mercy is freely offered to you as often as you have need of it.

The true glory of God will not be seen in shows of power like on Mt. Sinai. Rather it is seen in the relentless outpouring of mercy in Christ that God promises to those in need. It is seen in your Baptism that daily holds before you God's promises of forgiveness and sonship in the face of your darkest sin, your most hopeless hour, your failing flesh, and the tireless assaults of Satan. It is seen in bread and wine that mysteriously bear with them Jesus' own Body and Blood.

Praise and thanks be to Christ who has revealed to us the merciful glory of God most High. May the Holy Spirit grant us steadfastness of faith to always hunger and thirst for God's true glory - His rich and abundant mercy.

In the Name of +Jesus.

Pastor Ulmer

(We stand.) The peace of God which passes all human understanding keep you hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus our Lord.