

John 2:1-11

1On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. 2Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. 3When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." 4And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come." 5His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." 6Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. 7Jesus said to them, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. 8He said to them, "Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward." So they took it. 9When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom 10and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now." 11Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

Even Jesus knows better than to disobey his mother! Here they are at a wedding, probably a cousin or another relative, and his mother tells him to do something about the wine. Jesus, thinking he shouldn't be revealing his powers yet, disagrees with his mother, but like any good son he does what she says, and saves the couple's life.

Yes, you heard me right, he saved the couple's life. You see, in the time of Jesus a couple would be judged on economic shrewdness. In today's world when the booze is gone the guests simply realize it's time to leave the reception and gather their things together, give their well wishes to the newlyweds and go on their way. But in the time of Jesus, wine was an important commodity, it was the safe drink of the day. The water often wasn't able to be drunk without boiling it so wine was often the beverage included with a meal since the alcohol in the wine killed any impurities. There was always tea, but we don't hear a lot about tea drinking in those days. Wine was the expected beverage at the wedding reception, and the wedding reception was a party that could last for days.

Running out of wine could mean economic disaster for the couple because it would have meant that they were not wise enough to determine the amount of wine needed for the celebration. And if they couldn't make that type of determination they would be considered poor business managers. No one in the community would want to do business with a person who was not a good manager. If no one wanted to do business with them they would have no income. Without income they would not be able to survive. Jesus saved their lives when he gave them the gift of wine. That gift of wine was a gift of love.

Is it any wonder that the first recorded miracle of Jesus was a gift of love? And not just any kind of love, but the best love. Jesus took the water, six stone water jars of it, which were there for the rituals of purification. In the rituals of purification, which have nothing to do with cleanliness, the water is to be poured twice on one hand then twice on the other. Quite a bit of water would be needed for the number of persons at the reception, so having 180 gallons of water on hand wouldn't be unusual. 180 gallons of water that was turned into the best wine. Would Jesus give anything but his best?

What did Jesus do to turn the water into wine? It appears he did nothing other than tell the servants to draw the water out and take it to the chief steward. The chief steward would be like a head waiter in today's world. Somewhere between the jar and the chief steward the water was no longer water, but wine! And not just any wine, but the best wine. The chief

steward wants to know who would save their best wine for last. It would be normal to serve the good wine first, then give the people a lesser quality because their taste buds would have been numbed by now. But Jesus gave the very best, just as he always does.

When we look at the wedding festival, and Jesus turning water into wine we can't help but be reminded that the Church is the Bride of Christ. The Church is all persons who have turned to Christ for life, who have devoted themselves to following Christ, who trust in Christ for eternal life. Jesus the Christ has given this eternal life through the giving of his blood, through his death on the cross, through his resurrection from the dead. Each Sunday when we eat of his body and drink his blood, take the bread and wine, we are reminded of his selfless sacrifice. The wine is the new covenant poured out for you and for many for forgiveness of sin. The new covenant, the one that fulfilled God's promise to David's line that his successor will rule for ever. And we are included in that covenant even though we aren't directly in the line of David because of God's love for all people shown through Jesus Christ. Jesus opened the receipt of the covenant to all persons when he granted healing to the Syrophenician woman's daughter. Remember, the woman who said even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the master's table? From that point on gentiles, those who are not Jewish, were admitted to the healing grace of Jesus Christ.

Revelation 7:7 refers to the Bride of Christ "Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready;" You might be very fluent in Revelation and disagree with me, saying that the city of Jerusalem is the Bride of Christ as revealed in Rev 21:2 when the New Jerusalem descends from heaven adorned as a bride. It is not the city, but the people in the city who are the Bride of Christ because Jesus died for his people, not for a city.

Jesus gave the very best out of love for his people. Many times Jesus could have said, "I wasn't brought here for this.... I wasn't sent here to take care of the beggars, I wasn't sent here to heal the sick, I wasn't sent here to make the lame walk and the blind see. Jesus could have turned away from God after his baptism when the Spirit drew him out into the wilderness to face the Devil. Jesus could have accepted his power and worked for evil. But that isn't what love does. Love does what is good and right. Love serves the least and the lost. Love doesn't exploit their own power, even though it's possible. Doesn't that seem to be the way of the world today? Grabbing power wherever it is possible and trampling on those who seem to be weak. I spent Tuesday at a seminar about human trafficking.

I'm sure you'd rather not hear the stories I heard, but, believe it or not, human trafficking is taking place right under our noses. Those who are more powerful prey on the vulnerable with promises that sound too good to turn down. A young girl can be drawn into what seems like a great opportunity only to find out that it's the worst that could happen. An overweight middle aged woman can be kidnapped from a truck stop. People are being bought and sold all over the United States but because we don't know the signs, we don't see it happening. But it is the power hungry people, the people who think more about money and wealth than they do about human beings who are doing this. Not the people who follow Jesus Christ, who live by his example, who uphold the dignity of all humans because we are created in the image of God.

Why is it so important that Jesus did what his mother wanted and produced more wine for what seems to be insignificant in our day and time? Because from that first act of caring for

the life of a newlywed couple Jesus showed us not only his power to control resources, but he showed how important it is for us to care for one another. Not only did he give the bride and groom the promise of life, he gave them the best; just as he gave his best for each and every one of us. He showed us how important it is not only to take care of one another, but to do the best we can for everyone. Not only was wine produced, but we are given a glimpse into how Jesus is planning to save humanity with his blood. Not only did his first recorded miracle take place at a wedding, but it was symbolic of the wedding that will take place when Jesus returns and unites with his Bride, those who follow Christ. All because a couple ran out of wine at their wedding and Jesus' mother knew he could provide more.

All glory be to God.