



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

When Rodney and I moved to this area in October of 2011, we were astonished at how many people knew who we were and where we lived. "Oh, you are the ones that bought Wray Miller's house, or you are across from the DNR guy Dan Michels." First time I went to vote, the ladies working at town hall, knew who I was before I got in the door. They said you are the new pastor at that Lutheran Church in Park Falls and live just down the street with Rodney." WOW. Not a very large fishbowl for sure.

In seminary we had a class, one whole day, that was to prepare us for real life in a congregation. This was the first time I heard about the "clergy fishbowl syndrome". In retrospect probably why I wanted to live a bit outside of Park Falls. I thought it was just that I didn't want any of you to see me going to get the mail in my nighty or hear me cussing at the dog to get in the house. Well, our professor told us that to stay healthy, we could not let the fishbowl become a piranha bowl where people take a bite here and a bite there and pretty soon the water just gets bloody and there is no you left. Certainly, that has not happened at Christ the Servant, but I do think it happened to Jesus.

Our Gospel story for today is the beginning of Jesus being in the Messiah Fishbowl.

Jesus and his mother are at a wedding in Cana. No mention of who the couple was that got married, but Jesus is there with Mary and a few of his disciples. And remember that weddings are big events in Jesus' day. There were no Brewers games to watch on TV, no movie theatres or computer games for entertainment. So, a wedding was a big deal. And they usually lasted 7 days. Remembering the cost of Leigh Grace's wedding, I sure am glad it did not last more than 7 hours, yet alone 7 days. And the whole community was invited. And wine was essential. Not necessarily to get drunk, but certainly to have some fun.

And how shameful for the bridegroom's parents if they were to run out of food or wine. And sure enough, it happened. They were out of wine. What a disaster. This family sure would be the talk of the town for a long time to come.

Somehow, Mary finds out that this catastrophe has happened. She goes to her son and tells him about the situation. And Jesus in a rather rough way rebukes his mother by saying that it is not their concern. And then the biggie, Jesus says, "My hour has not yet come." Not ready to enter the fishbowl just yet. Mary does not take this as his final answer. She goes and tells the servants to listen to her son. In her heart she must have known that Jesus would handle this calamity.

A question for our Gospel writer John, why would he retell this story as Jesus' first sign? Would it not have been better to use a larger-than-life feat of healing or raising someone from the dead, rather than turning water into wine? And notice too that not many people were present to witness this event. Only Mary, the servants, and maybe the few disciples were actually privy to what happened. Even the wine steward and bridegroom did not understand what had happened. John does not tell us his reasoning and in fact, many other details are not explained either.

How did his mother know that Jesus could solve the wine shortage issue? What had happened in their life together that gave her the idea that Jesus could do such a sign? Why are there so many jugs at the wedding? Yes, ritual purification needed to happen before such a special event, but probably a cup or two of water would have been enough for the ceremonial ritual. And why does Jesus take such exception to his mother's request that he help? True, there was a very small audience for His first miracle. Lots of questions

here in what we do not know. But guess that gives us preachers something to talk to you about on Sunday mornings.

To me the important thing in this story comes in the statement in the last verse, “revealed his glory”. This miracle or sign is all about Jesus revealing his glory. So, what exactly does that mean?

We first must understand that a miracle or a sign does not have a life of its own. It is there to point to something bigger than itself. We are not talking about how amazing it is that water can be turned into wine. This wine was to let the bridegroom continue his party, but eventually the wine will be exhausted, and people will go home. No different is one of Jesus’ more well experienced miracles of feeding the 5000 with a little boy’s lunch. Yes, their stomachs were filled, and all were satisfied, but in another 6 hours or so they would be hungry again. Even one of the greatest miracles of bring Lazarus back to life is short lived as he would die again and be buried. So, you see that all his miracles have short lived consequences for the recipients, but the long-term goal was to show Jesus in his glory. All the miracles showed the power of Jesus.

And maybe that is why Jesus was hesitant to show his power at his mother’s request, for the power Jesus has comes from the one who sent him, God. Jesus does not take his power for granted and neither should anyone, not even his mother. These signs will happen in God’s time, not in human time.

Our water into wine story is not that He is able to make water into 20 proof wine. It is about those who see these signs putting their trust in God through Jesus. Jesus is the one that will bridge the gap between heaven and earth. Every sign in John’s gospel will continue to reveal his glory, his purpose in coming into the world. And surely his hour will come when he will be revealed for who he truly is, God’s only Son, the true Messiah of Israel.

There are 2 clues about this. The first one is the way John begins this story, “On the third day”. We have no idea what on the third day refers too. The third day after or before what? We all know now what that refers too. On the third day, Jesus rose from the dead. On the third day, the tomb was empty.

The other clue is found in what the wine steward said, remember?” Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guest have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now.” God sent the law, Abraham and the prophets, Moses to the Israelites and now finally, God has

sent Jesus. He saved the very best for last. God always gives his very best and that folks is Jesus Christ.

It is Jesus that ends up in the fishbowl if you will. People did not always get Jesus at least until he was lifted up on the cross where his final glory was able to shine from the empty tomb. They followed Him and asked things of Him. They wanted miracles to make their lives better. But they did not see Jesus in all his glory until there was blood in the water, until that fishbowl was empty. Jesus hung on the cross until death overtook his mortal body and then three days later, he rose from the grave. It was impossible to not see Jesus in all His glory, again alive and on His way to be with His Father in heaven.

Somehow Mary knew in her heart that Jesus could solve the no wine situation. Today we know too that Jesus is the only one to solve our situation. God is the only one to offer us forgiveness, abundant and eternal life. And he does that through His only Son, Jesus. But in order to do that, Jesus was in the piranha bowl for a bit. Today His hour has come. It has come to this sanctuary, right here and right now. Jesus gives us his best, his glory. Are we willing to receive it?

AMEN.