

A Mother's Intuition

Sixth Sunday of Easter

May 9, 2021

Sermon Text, John 2:1-11

2:1 On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there,² and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding.³ When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine."

⁴ "Woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My hour has not yet come."

⁵ His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

⁶ Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.

⁷ Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim.

⁸ Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet."

They did so,⁹ and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside¹⁰ and said, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now."

¹¹ What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

¹² After this he went down to Capernaum with his mother and brothers and his disciples. There they stayed for a few days.

Sermon, "A Mother's Intuition"

There's nothing quite like wedding humor. Maybe you heard about the usher who asked one woman, "Are you a friend of the groom?"

She responded, "No, I'm the bride's mother."

Then there was the groom who was on his way to the church for his wedding when his car broke down. He phoned the church and left a frantic message for his bride-to-be, saying, "Don't marry anyone until I get there!"

During another ceremony the preacher asked the bridal couple if they would pledge themselves to one another "for better, for worse; for richer, for poorer" when a little girl in the congregation called out, "Choose richer!"



This morning we're going to take a look at the wedding in Cana and follow the flow of events as they move from **celebration** to **desperation** and finally to **transformation**.

Cana was a small town, probably populated by just a few hundred people. That fact would suggest that a wedding in Cana would've been a community event.

Cana was located just over three miles north of Nazareth, Jesus' hometown. John 21:2 tells us that one of his disciples, Nathaniel, was from Cana. I wonder if Jesus had known Nathaniel when he was younger. In the previous chapter, Jesus called Nathaniel to follow him; now

Nathaniel accompanies Jesus to the wedding. I wonder if there was a special connection between Nathaniel and the wedding couple.

No doubt Jesus attended the wedding because he was a friend of the family; he knew these people. He knew the bride and the groom, so he was invited along with the rest of his family and most, if not all of his disciples.

I don't mean to imply that Jesus went begrudgingly. Rather, these were his neighbors, and he went to enjoy a good party. Now we don't generally think of Jesus in these terms, but it seems likely that Jesus shared a few laughs with the other guests. He may very well have danced and even had a glass of wine.

But then, something terrible happened: the wine ran out. In our day we tend to associate wine with alcohol; consequently, in our society we put age limits on who may drink it. However, in Jesus' day, wine was an important refreshment. To fail to provide sufficient wine was a social disgrace. Hence, it was customary to dilute the wine with water—three parts water to one part wine—just to make sure it wouldn't run out. In fact, it's likely that the bride's family had already diluted the wine, but their attempt to stretch it out had failed.

Such an error would never be forgotten in a small town like Cana. Years later, people would still gossip about it; it would harm the young couple's reputation for years to come. In fact, in some cases it would've been possible to take legal action against a family which failed to adequately provide the proper wedding feast. And you thought our society had the corner on supercilious lawsuits! Can you imagine suing someone for not having enough wine at a wedding?

By verse 3, the situation has become desperate: the bride is in tears and her father is afraid of getting sued by a bunch of thirsty wedding guests!

It's into this situation that we see a mother's intuition at work.

We know that Jesus has not yet performed a miracle, but Mary had her suspicions. Mary is now in her mid-40s. She's long-since married Joseph and had other children sometime after the birth of Jesus. According to tradition, Mary was a widow by this time; Joseph had died but undoubtedly Jesus' half-siblings were also guests at the wedding of Cana.

Remember when Jesus was born how the angels sang and the shepherds came to worship him. The Bible tells us that after the shepherds returned to their fields, that "Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart" (Luke 2:19).

Mary knew that there was something special about Jesus. Certainly Gabriel's annunciation of the birth of the Messiah would've tipped her off, but that could've been dismissed as a dream or a delusion.

The visit of the shepherds was different. They represented an outside, objective witness to the special nature of Mary's son Jesus. And over the next thirty years, she pondered the meaning of their visit as well as the nature of her son's messiahship.

I wonder if there were days when she thought, "Will Jesus ever get going on this business of saving Israel?"

Finally, Mary reached her tipping point. Her friends' daughter had gotten married, and they'd run out of wine. She knew something had to be done to save them from social disgrace. She also knew that she could do nothing. But her intuition—her *faith*—told her that Jesus could do something.

So Mary says to Jesus, "They've run out of wine."

To which Jesus responds, "Woman, what is that to me? My hour is not yet come."

I know that calling his mother *woman* sounds rather rude. But in the vernacular of his day, there was no disrespect in his response at all.

What I find even more intriguing is that Jesus didn't think his hour had not yet come. I think that reveals his human side more than anything, because his mother's intuition was telling him that, yes, your time *has* come.

Sometimes mothers can see things in us that we don't see in ourselves. That was true even in the case of Jesus: his mother realized his time had come even before Jesus realized his time had come. One might even say that Mary believed in Jesus before Jesus believed in himself. It's a unique exchange in scripture showing us the human side of the Messiah.

Mary seemed to know that Jesus would come around, and that he would do so quickly. So she went to the servants and said one of the most powerful lines in scripture: "**Whatsoever he says to you, do it**" (vs. 5). It's a command that is just as relevant to us today—one that we would do well to follow.

It wasn't long before Jesus directed the servants to fill some jars with water. Now the water they used would've been the water typically used in Jewish purification rites. It represents our human attempts at cleansing ourselves. Unfortunately, we can only cleanse ourselves on the outside; we need transformation in order to experience cleansing on the inside.

That transformation comes as the water of self-purification becomes the wine of Christ. And it's not diluted.

The wine of Christ reminds us of Holy Communion. And Christ equates the wine of communion with his blood. And blood cleanses us on the inside—touching every cell of our body to take away the impurities of our lives.

These six stone jars were large, each one capable of holding 20 gallons or more; they may have been capable of holding 30 gallons. However, using our lowest estimate, we find that Jesus transformed 120 gallons of water into 120 gallons of wine—the equivalent of 2,400 servings.

That makes this a miracle of abundance. Just a chapter earlier, John wrote, "Of his fullness we have all received—grace upon grace" (verse 16). Now at the wedding of Cana we find the fullness of Christ poured out for many. And it would've represented a substantial gift for the bridal couple as they began their lives together.

So what do we learn from this story?

We learn that Jesus was comfortable and even enjoyed himself at a party.

We learn that it was a mother's intuition and faith that saved the day.

We learn that at the very outset of his ministry that Jesus is in the transforming business. He turned water into wine and he turns sinners into saints.

Notice where the miracle occurred: inside a water jug where the transformation was unseen. And that's just how he transforms our lives: it takes place on the inside where the transformation is unseen. But then our transformation spills out to impact others. And the end result is always better than the first and it's never diluted or weakened in any way.

Finally, we learn that Jesus always saves the best for last. Paul wrote, "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18).

And elsewhere, "Our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:17-18).

Thanks be to God!