

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

Two weeks ago, we celebrated Epiphany, which means manifestation. That Sunday we heard the story of the wise men traveling to Bethlehem following the star so they would be able to bow before the newborn king and shower him with their gifts of Gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Our second revelation came last week when we heard the story in Luke chapter 3 of Jesus being baptized. This Epiphany comes to us so we will be aware that Jesus is God's son, with whom He is well pleased. This morning we continue to have God's only son revealed to us, for a third time, as He performs his first miracle; turning water into wine.

First the magi, then God Himself, and today it is Mary who confirms what she has known all along, and that Jesus shows us that He is the Messiah. And also today, Jesus will confirm for his mother and the disciples that he is truly special, sent from God and able to do great things. So, this morning we are going to look at this sign or miracle by Jesus and see what we can learn from it.

So, lets sit back and imagine for a minute that you are at the wheel of your car. If you are too young to drive, you can just imagine what it might be like to drive a car. You are going down an unfamiliar road. You keep your eyes on the road, yet you also keep your eyes on the side of the road. The side of the road is very important as that is where you will find the signs that you rely on to tell you what is ahead. For example, if you see a sign that indicates that there is a sharp turn ahead, you pay careful attention to that sign and watch the road carefully. Or what about a sign that says stop ahead. You respond by taking your foot off the gas pedal, beginning to slow down. Or maybe you have another sign, as you see a deer dash across the street from the side of the road. That is a for sure slam on the breaks sign.

So, what is the significance of a sign, then? Are they important in and of themselves? Do we pay a lot of attention to the sign itself? OR are we to be more concerned with what they are telling us?

If you look in the dictionary, a sign is something that conveys information about something else. Many of the definitions of sign use the word "symbol". A sign is a symbol of something that represents something else. They convey meaning and often times the importance of what is to come, like a terrible accident if we do not yield to the deer who peeked out of the brush on the side of the road. When we see a sign whether it is a road sign, deer in the headlights, a symbol used in a mathematical equation or even a biblical sign, we need to honor that sign, not for itself but what it

means or what is to come. Our Biblical sign shown by Jesus for, is turning water into wine. This event is a sign that shows us who Jesus is. Another epiphany if you will. One that Mary suggests and then Jesus confirms when he performs the sign, water into wine.

This is the story; it is the day after Jesus calls his first disciples and he is literally just beginning his public ministry. Jesus, his siblings, his mother Mary, and the disciples are invited to a wedding. And of course, they attend. Now weddings in Jewish tradition usually lasted seven days. Imagine that an entire week. The bridegroom was the host and expected to provide enough food and wine for the whole seven days. Boy I wish that had been true when my daughter planned her wedding! I am a great planner as you all well know, but a seven-day wedding would be a stretch, even for me!

Well, it was a stretch for the bridegroom at this wedding in Cana. He ran into a big, big problem at his wedding.... he ran out of wine.

In the first century Jewish math, that adds up, no wine unfinished wedding celebration. That would be a major faux pas, a big no-no and the host would surely be the butt of jokes for years to come. If his family were like mine, at every family gathering when someone poured a glass of wine there would be snickers about how we ran out of wine at the wedding. What I am trying to point out is that this is a very embarrassing situation that would haunt the groom for a long time to come.

Well, Jesus' mother, Mary, when she learns that they have run out of wine, tells Jesus. Probably having witnessed her son to have some special powers and realizing his true identity, she asks subtly in her own way for Jesus to help. However, Jesus does not respond positively to his mother's implicit request. He asks her why that should concern them.

Some may think that Jesus is a bit rude to his mother, but he sets the stage showing that he is not controlled by anyone. And I would guess that he got that mother sink eye. You know the ones folks. When mama ain't happy no one is happy. Well, Jesus is a bit stuck here and admonishes her, as He is only responsible to his Father in heaven. He used the excuse that He is not ready. Yet, Jesus of his own volition, chooses to do something about the wine. What does he do? He has the servant fill the six stone jars with water. Normally, these jars would be filled with water that was used for Jewish purification rites. Then he orders them to draw out some of the liquid and give it to the chief steward. At what precise moment the miracle occurs, we are not told, but once it reaches the chief steward the water has transformed into wine. And the steward, being oblivious to what Jesus has done, congratulates the groom for saving the superior wine until this point in the wedding celebration. Note here that Jesus does not pray as He did at his baptism, nor does he look to heaven raise his hands and say "thank you" to his Father, He simply changes all the water, probably about 150 gallons into fine wine. The servants appear to know what has taken place, and so do the disciples, but not all the banquet guests are privy to the sign or miracle. There is no big hoopla, no heavens opening, no big deal. Just Mary, Jesus, a few servants, and several disciples. So, it was with lesus first miracle.

John makes a point of telling us that the disciples believed in him. We hear nothing about the servants who also witnessed this miracle. Interesting how these two groups of men had different responses to the sign that Jesus preformed. I think we learn two things here. First, is that just because you are in the presence of a miracle being preformed doesn't mean that you will notice anything miraculous and second, even if you witness a miracle, this does not mean you will understand the significance of the miracle or respond the way God intends for you to respond.

You see, miracles are in and of themselves not significant. God does not use miracles to impress, astonish, amaze, or entertain us. Just like the signs on the side of the road, miracles point us to what lies ahead. They highlight what is to come of importance. Miracles, like signs draw our attention to something, or in the case of the water to wine in Canaan, it draws attention to someone. Our gospel writer John does not dress up this miracle, but we can see that this miracle was to help out the bridegroom and relieve him of possible embarrassment. What do you see or think that this miracle signifies?

For me this miracle shows that God can do amazing things. The extravagance of this miracle shows us that Jesus has a superabundance of gifts. The steward notices that this is really good wine in the jars. This bridegroom has saved the best for last. Yet, we know that it is not the groom that is responsible for the good wine. Only Jesus can provide spectacular new wine.

Our Scripture says that Jesus "revealed his glory". That speaks to me that Jesus' glory is that of the Father's only Son. In Chapter One of John's Gospel, we heard verse 14, "And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth." Jesus is revealing to us who the Father is by his relationship with the Father. We can trust Jesus to reveal who the Father is, not only to Him but to us as well. One of the clear purposes of miracles was to authenticate the character and person of Jesus as God's only Son. Jesus revealing his glory through this sign of changing water into wine. Jesus reveals who he is and who his father is. What is that saying, "The deed reveals the doer".

Another sign within this story is when Jesus tells his mother that, "My hour has not yet come". That was his answer when Mary tells him that there is no more wine. When Jesus talks about his hour, he is referring to the cross, to the journey to Golgotha, to Calvary. The road He is to take. Once Jesus reveals his glory through this first of his signs or miracles, that hour has come. It is now not only about the miracles or sign Jesus will do, but the direction He is going, to the cross. John's Gospel links this story with the cross as bookends to everything that happens in between. Today we know that it is in going to the cross and being raised from the grave that Jesus is truly glorified, and God is made known.

The whole point of this miracle of Jesus, is so that His glory might be revealed and that we might believe in him. The whole point is to draw our attention to who Jesus is and what his mission is. The whole point is to look away from the miracle as quickly as possible and look toward Jesus. To look toward Jesus with eyes of faith, of belief, of wonder, and of trust, knowing that by looking at him we are also looking at God himself.

And now I ask you how do you think of this miracle? Are you like the steward who just rationalizes the good wine that shows up near the end of the celebration? Are you like the servants who watch Jesus turn water into wine with some awe and astonishment? Or are you like the disciples who saw the sign and believed in Jesus?

A quick story: A man and his dog were walking along a beach. After walking a good distance, they met another man walking toward them. The owner of the day was proud of his dog's abilities. So, when the other man showed interest in his dog, he had his pet show off for the stranger. He had him sit, speak, and shake hands. But he saved his dog's special ability for the grand finale. He told the stranger, "Watch this!" Then he tossed a piece of driftwood far out in the ocean. He told his dog to fetch. The dog ran on top of the water to fetch the piece of wood! Only his paws were getting wet. After reaching the stick the dog came running back. Again, he was on top of the water! He

dropped the stick at his master's feet. The stranger was shaking his head in disbelief. Just to show him that this wasn't a onetime miracle the man had his dog do it two more time. Still the other man stood there speechless. He just kept shaking his head. Finally, the owner of the dog couldn't take it anymore. He asked, "Well, aren't you going to say anything, can you believe my dog can walk on water!" He went on to ask, "Isn't that amazing? Don't you think that's impressive that my dog can walk on water?" At last, the man had something to say about the dog. He responded, "Your dog can't swim, can he?"

The real miracle is not the turning water into wine, but rather the faith of the disciples. The act of putting our faith in Jesus Christ is more amazing than all the miracles and signs put together. Yet it is these miracles that point us to the one to whom we should bow down and worship.

Jesus Christ came to us, truly human and truly divine. God has made him known to us through the help of the Holy Spirit. The wise men sought the star that the baby messiah laid under. Through the baptism of Jesus God made know to us that Jesus was His son with whom He was well pleased. The miracle of water into wine was another sign of the power of the one who came for us, the one who came to die for us on the cross, the one who secured our future for us, Jesus Christ. Have faith in Jesus, for He is the only one worthy of our faith and our praise.

AMEN