

Second Weekend After Epiphany (RCL/C): "Good Lord, He's Done It Again!"

Isaiah 62:1-5; John 2:1-11

January 15-16, 2022

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Manasquan, NJ

This greeting card shows a man in a clergy collar seated in the driver's seat, with a police officer standing next to the stopped car. The policeman asks, "Reverend, have you been drinking?" The pastor answers, "Just water, officer." You open the card and the officer skeptically asks, "Then why do I smell **wine**?" The pastor's response: "Good Lord! **He's done it again!**" The message at the bottom is: (Have a miraculous birthday.)

It's not every day that greeting cards reflect Gospel stories. This story of the wedding at Cana in Galilee does lend itself to funny interpretations, though. It's unique!

Changing of water into wine is the first "sign" Jesus performs in St. John's Gospel. A "sign" **is** a miracle, one that fosters faith in the one who witnesses it **and** who understands what all the hoopla is about. It's not just water changed into wine, or a man born blind getting his first glimpse of the world, or 5,000+ fed with five loaves and two fish, or dead Lazarus called forth from the tomb alive and well. It's God's "epiphany," God's aurora borealis, **God's glory** shining through God's Son, Jesus: Light shattering darkness, hope upstaging despair, life overcoming death, healing banishing sickness of body and soul. These are signs of **heaven coming to earth**, God's Kingdom come, God's will done, by God's Son.

It's almost silly, and more than a little puzzling, that Jesus' first obvious, explosive use of divine power in this Fourth Gospel is keeping the wine flowing at a wedding. Surely there were hungry people to be fed and not just thirsty wedding guests ready for a refill. There were lame folks longing to run, lepers waiting for a clean bill of health, dying people

clutching at life, more life. But reversing those kinds of problems will have to wait. The wedding must go on!

Not that Jesus appears anxious to jump in. His mother (who remains nameless not just here, but throughout this whole Gospel) has her hand in the small of His back, pushing Him forward. She's connected to the grape vine, so to speak, and has learned that the supply of vino has dried up. Her Son is at the very beginning of His ministry out in the world. He's a fledgling rabbi, having just called His first disciples. There's no track record of signs performed, no stories of miracles yet. But she somehow knows that He can help. Her Son can prevent the social embarrassment of an empty wine cellar. The mother of Jesus has two lines of dialogue, not just in this particular story but in all of the Fourth Gospel. Her first statement is directed to her Son: *"They have no wine."* (John 2:3c)

Certainly Jesus knows what His mom is angling for, but He's not taking the hook.

"Is that any of our business, Mother – yours or mine? This isn't my time. Don't push me." (John 2:4, *The Message*)

"My hour has not yet come," "This isn't my time"; in other words this isn't the **fullness** of time, this isn't **good** timing, this isn't **God's** timing.... But it is the **perfect** time to help, in the mind and heart of the mother of Jesus, so she plows ahead and tells the wait staff:

"Do whatever he tells you." (John 2:5b)

Kinda cheeky, not our usual take on her as meek and mild, compliant, uncomplaining, low key. More like Luke's pregnant Magnificat Mary, whom we saw on Advent IV.

That's the extent of the debate between mother and Son. Jesus directs, *"Fill the jars with water."* (John 2:7b) It's not His only about-face in this Gospel. There's a royal official whose son is dying. The man begs Jesus, the healer, to save him. Jesus' initial response is

more critical than compassionate: *“Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe.”*

(John 4:48b) The desperate father persists:

“Sir, come down before my little boy dies.” Jesus said to him, “Go; your son will live.” The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him.... (John 4:49)

The child recovered. His healing was the sign that led his father and all the family to faith.

The mother of Jesus went to bat for the bride and groom and their families. The government official went to bat for his son. Jesus responded, despite what sure looks like initial hesitation. This story of the wedding at Cana isn't primarily about the power of intercession, but I sure think it plays a part. It's a solid reminder that we should go to God with our loved ones in tow, asking God to bless them, to heal them, to shield them from shame, to counteract despair, to dispel disappointment, to open some doors and close others, to fulfil the divine plan for each sacred life. In baptism we receive a priestly identity, which includes the authority, the responsibility, to intercede with Heaven on earth's behalf. It's baptism, not ordination, that sets us up to pray, to take the needs of God's people and of God's creation directly to God. Jesus is our great high priest, as we read in the letter to the Hebrews, but He deputizes us as well to pray, to intercede, in His name.

Did you notice how enthusiastically the wedding wait staff fills the stone jars? How full do they fill them? *“...[t]o the brim”!* I'm thinking if I'm going to identify with anyone in this story, it's with the waiters. My role, not just as a pastor, but as a Christian, is to follow the lead of the mother of Jesus and to do whatever He tells me. He tells me to fill a stone jar? I'll fill it: to the brim! I can't turn water into wine. That's up to Him. But I can do whatever He tells me and fill that huge jar to the brim.

There are many “jars to be filled” in a family of faith and many spiritual gifts and helping hands needed to do all that the Lord requires of us as a community that proclaims

Christ in Word **and** deed. God honors us by giving us Kingdom work to do in this world. That's true of us as Holy Trinity Lutheran Church and true of us as individuals. Some of those holy assignments are within these walls and some are beyond. Some of us are called to minister to one person and others are called to serve many. There are those among us whose full-time vocation is caring for a loved one who is ill or otherwise disabled, those whose energies are all directed to honoring the vow "for better and for worse, in sickness and in health." There are folks whose holy assignment is done solo, behind the scenes, working with numbers on the computer, money in the offering plate, altar linens, flowers or pew envelopes and pencils. There are others who teach, reach out to, visit, support, cheerlead, Holy Trinity family members who are well-known to them, loved and cherished. There are still others who extend our community's care to the world around us, serving the hungry, the temporarily homeless, the furniture-less, the newcomers, whose names we don't necessarily know, whose lives intersect with ours for the briefest of moments, but who are known and loved on high and are placed in our path for a holy purpose.

Whatever the spiritual gifts we share, the labors of love we perform, we are simply filling the water jars that our Lord will turn into wine. We are so blessed to be part of God's wait staff! The wine at Cana is a symbol of joy and celebration, as much as a newly popped bottle of champagne. Jesus is the best vintage of all. His life, death and resurrection are the reason for our ongoing celebration and joyful service. Through the eyes of faith we see the daily signs of love and grace He still performs. Let's be quick to point out, "Good Lord, He's done it again!" [Have a miraculous day. Every day.] Amen
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