

The Second Sunday After Epiphany

January 17, 2021

John 2:1-111

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Where is your faith? We must ask this question of ourselves routinely, even daily. We ask this question for good reason, because where the object of one's faith is, there also will the heart reside.

If you thought the turn of the calendar would usher in a better year or that the year 2021 could not be worse than the previous year - your televisions, the news you read and consume, the twitter scrolls after dark reveal a very different story. Mobs storming the nation's Capitol, National Guard patrolling the streets and calling the Capitol home, winds of impeachment swirling before inauguration, and questions of a peaceful transition of power ringing in the minds of citizens. (Isn't it great living in the D.C. area?)

While you'd like to believe these events affect only the people you do not know, you quickly realize the happenings of this world affect all of your families, they affect your relationships among one another here within the church (across these pews), they even affect the conversations of your children while at school.

Which brings us back to the original question, "Where is your faith?" Because where your faith is, there will your family's heart also reside.

Now, weddings are the beginning of families, the foundation. The love of two people, a man and a woman, united before God, pledged to love one another. A pledge to love, honor, and keep one another in sickness and health, forsaking all others in order to remain united. Marriage and the wedding ceremony also provide an image of the relationship between Christ and His Church.

Throughout time, weddings have been occasions of great joy and feasting; they were occasions of social and family concord and unity. For this reason, the wedding became a central prophetic symbol for the peace and prosperity that God's salvation would bring to His people.

A wedding also reveals the outward manifestation of love two people give to one another. Likewise, the Gospel for this day begins to reveal and manifest the love God has for you, His bride and Church on earth.

Now, if you have planned a wedding, you know there are many things that must be tended to leading up to the day. Even while the wedding begins and guests are coming and going throughout the evening, there are situations that demand attention. Running out of wine during this wedding in Cana would not reflect favorably upon the

host. Thus, Mary the wedding planner that she becomes - approaches her Son and says, *"They have no wine."* Not good.

Jesus responded to Mary by saying, *"Woman, what does your concern have to do with me? My hour has not yet come."* It's tempting to get caught up in Jesus' address to His mother, but, we should not take this as Jesus being disrespectful towards His mother. If we addressed our mother in this way today, we'd be in trouble, no question about it. But here, it is simply a matter of speech that is found throughout John's Gospel. Jesus addresses the Samaritan women at the well the same way and in the only other instance of His mother Mary in John's Gospel, Jesus will address her again as *"Woman"* from the cross.

But here, this exchange between Jesus and His mother does begin to reveal the object of Mary's faith, her Son. She believes her Son, who attended this joyful occasion with His disciples is obliged to replenish and can replenish the wine He and His disciples had partaken. But, Jesus says something quite odd, *"My hour has not yet come."*

This, however, does not seem to matter for Mary, because she is already telling the servants, *"Whatever He says to you, do it."* It's as if she is no longer listening to Jesus and has moved onto the next task or returned to the festivities.

But, the hour has not come for Jesus, and when He says this, He is looking beyond the here and now of this wedding and looking toward the hour of His death, the hour when He will speak from the cross to His mother, *"Woman, behold your son!"* *Then [turning to His disciple John], "Behold your mother!" (John 19:26-27)* The hour when He will consummate a new church and a new family united through His death upon the cross.

For the moment, however, the servants must do what Jesus instructs, they must fill the stone jars meant for the purification with water. From these jars the water is transformed into wine and so is the manner in which the Church on earth will be purified going forward. Through the wine and blood of Christ Jesus shed for you – you also will be purified - forgiven.

It is at the hour of Christ's death; the full wrath and punishment for your uprisings of disobedience are placed upon Christ the Bridegroom by the Father. Why? So that you would not be forsaken, but purged of your sin through confession and absolution – transformed and reunited to the Father. The Bridegroom gives His life, so the bride – the Church may receive life. In turn, this becomes the object of your faith – ***Jesus Christ and Him crucified. (1 Corinthians 2:2)***

If you were to review the conversations you engage in throughout the week, the tweets you have sent, the news you consume – would they reveal Christ Jesus as the object of your faith? Or would they reveal a faith quite different, a faith in the institutions of man? Our words and actions will always manifest what we truly hold dear in this life, where we place our trust.

Mary provides us a pattern today, she turns to her Son in the time of need. In turn, she instructs the servants to also turn to her son, Jesus, as she orders them to do as He instructs. As one of my seminary professors remarked regarding this text, *“The servants assume the role of the new Israel [they] hear the Word of Christ as though it were the new Torah and do it.”* Jesus will later say in the Gospel of John, *“If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.”* (John 12:26)

What does it look like to serve Jesus and follow Him? Look to our Epistle today, the apostle Paul wrote:

Let love be genuine.

Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.

Love one another with brotherly affection.

Outdo one another in showing honor.

Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord.

Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.

Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.

Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.

Live in harmony with one another.

Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly.

Never be wise in your own sight. (Romans 12:9-16)

This is what it looks like to follow Jesus, this is how Christ is manifested with you, the Church.

We often believe the here and now is the most important hour of our lives – so we drink and fret in the hour of darkness and we drink and are merry in the hour of joy. But, as Christians, our eyes are ultimately not on the here and now, but set on the day that is to come. The day when Christ our Lord returns for His bride the Church, gathering you who have been purified through His death and resurrection for the final wedding feast.

Dear friends, focus your eyes on Jesus, your Bridegroom and the object of your faith. Only in Him will you receive true concord and unity. He will not forsake you, but will gather you into the wedding hall of eternal peace and joy on the last day. +INJ+

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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