

John 2:1-11
I Cor 12:1-11
20 Jan 2013

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“Look Ma, No Hands!”

A small boy was asked by a visiting relative if he attended Sunday school. When he said he did, he was asked, "What are you learning?" "Last week," came the reply, "our lesson was about when Jesus went to a wedding and made water into wine." "And what did you learn from that story?" the relative inquired. After thinking for a moment, the boy answered, "If you're having a wedding, make sure Jesus is there!"

Ask any minister which they would rather preside at, a wedding or a funeral, and they will undoubtedly say – “funeral” – at least those who have been in the ministry for a long time. Weddings are fraught with expectations of perfection. There is a lot of emotional investment in weddings – and a lot of well-laid plans. And we know what happens to even the best plans!

One retired minister told a story of a wedding where the families didn't see eye to eye. The during the rehearsal you could cut the tension with a knife. When the day came and the ceremony began, the bride started hiccupping. The minister tried to plow forward and someone in the back burst out in

gales of laughter. One of those contagious, belly laughs that finally broke the ice and had everyone laughing, even to the point of tears.

I've had my share of wedding experiences, too. But nothing like what faced the weddings hosts in Cana when they started running out of wine early in the week-long wedding celebration. We might think, "What's the big deal? Couldn't they just run out and get more?" It wasn't that easy. The family had been storing up their supply since the couple got engaged. Besides, wine takes time to make – from vine to glass. So who knows when the next decent vintage would be available.

It wasn't so much the wine but even a+ m hint that the hosts had fallen down on their hospitality would have marked their reputation for years. "Remember that wedding in Cana? The party got cut short because they didn't have any wine. Sure...they just wanted to kick us out early." Better to be remembered for generous hospitality than for apparent arrogance and rudeness.

But none of that happened because Jesus was there. Actually, it was the mother of Jesus who noticed the crisis occurring. She is the one who provides the leadership for what become Jesus first miraculous act.

³When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." ⁴And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come." ⁵His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

The implication here is that Jesus can and should do something about it. How Mary knows this, we are never told. Maybe she caught him at the breakfast table turning his goat milk into chocolate milk a few times. Whatever her sense of what Jesus could do, she knew he was able.

There is one odd sticking point in this story. It is the way Jesus tries to disengage from the situation. “What concern is that to you and to me?” Jesus seems reluctant to reveal who he is to the world at this point. But Mary points to the human need in the situation and looks at the servants. “Do whatever he tells you.” Jesus responds and the best wine is now served to keep the party going.

The servants know what has happened, the steward is amazed, and the disciples believe in Jesus. Everyone seems to sense that the feast has been saved. (p 260, Feasting on the Word, Year C, Vol 1)

We may wonder why divine intervention can save a wedding feast but not end world hunger or stop wars. We’d like to see the strong hand of God smite our enemies or cure our disease. Where is the grace of God at work in all these things? The key word here is grace. If we look closely where people are crying out for God, if we get behind the scenes, we will find people risking their lives, sharing their last piece of bread, offering their love. That is God’s grace at work through the compassion of humankind.

In the third chapter of Ecclesiastes there is a line that follows the familiar passage “for every time there is a season.’ It is a statement of faith and informs us how God hopes all God’s children will live: 12I know that there is nothing better for them than to be happy and enjoy themselves as long as they live; 13moreover, it is God’s gift that all should eat and drink and take pleasure in all their toil.”

Well-being and shared experience make the heart of God glad. So maybe is not so odd that an act of the divine kept the people eating and drinking there in Cana. “...Jesus turned water into wine to point us to his heavenly father, a God who loves to hear the laughter of people – celebrating people.” (p 262)

Are we, the church, a celebrating people? Could, we the church be a miracle - no different from water being turned to wine? Maybe this will help illustrate what I mean.

I was talking to a woman one day. She had grown up going to church as a child. Then she started going back again as an adult. She just attended worship and then went home. Then she started getting involved, and read the church’s annual report. “I had no idea so much happened here. I used to think the minister only worked on Sunday. Newsletters just showed up in my mailbox and worship just, well, happened.”

Church is a miracle because behind the scenes are all those members of Christ's body working to make it happen.

The church, or as Paul calls us, the body of Christ, is where we should be able to live in such a way. A celebrating people, taking pleasure in all our toil. Not ignoring the cares of the world, but because of them. The church – made up of all of us ears and feet and hands and hearts – is where the extravagant hospitality of God can be experienced by all who walk through our doors. Does this mean we all have to see eye to eye on every subject? Absolutely not. We would not only be boring but we wouldn't be authentic people of faith.

We can be the church because we are different. The mark of Christ's church, like the hosts of the wedding feast, is hospitality. Serving church dinners is no different than setting your table and inviting people over. When even the stranger feels welcome, then grace is happening. Serving in worship is like greeting friends at the door and asking to take their coat and inviting them to sit and be comfortable. Grace happens. Serving on a committee or board is like making sure the house is clean and the lights are on so that guests can easily find their way in. All we do as church is as if to say, "Come in. We've been waiting for you. All is ready."

Miracles are not something of the past. They happen every day. May we be the miracle, the body of Christ, the church, that makes grace happen, no matter where we are.