

August 12, 2018 The Guest Pt. 8 John 2:1-11

I wrestled with the choosing of what should be the final chapter of this series. On the one hand it seemed very appropriate to end with last week's story from Luke 24, the focus being on the resurrection, and the meaningfulness of The Lord's Supper to the community which serves the crucified and risen Lord. On the other hand it seemed appropriate to go back to the beginning of Jesus ministry in Galilee, and the miracle of changing water into wine. The one thing we all recognize is that a wedding is almost always followed by a party and a feast. In the end I chose this last reality. Jesus clearly attending a party with food and drink and dancing. A Jewish wedding involves all three. If you have ever seen *The Fiddler On The Roof*, as a stage production or the movie...you know exactly what I mean. The marriage occurs conducted by the rabbi. And then the food, the wine, and the dancing as the community celebrates this new household as part of that continuing faith community.

This is one of those points where we see so very clearly that the Christian tradition adopts with very little change, the wedding practice of the Old Testament community. So when we are asked to provide a wedding service as the New Testament community....we assume a faith based service, which recognizes the law of our province regarding marriage, followed by (in most cases) a dinner, (food and drink) and a dance.

John chapter 2 begins with this cryptic phrase, on the third day. In John's telling of the experience of following Jesus who is the Christ Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist, HE called the 12 disciples and Jesus public ministry begins. Commentators tend to agree that the designation of the 3<sup>rd</sup> day, is a statement of how long Jesus has been in the Galilee region. The traditional site of Jesus baptism is located at the Jordan in Galilee. The Calling of the disciples we know from the other Gospels occurred on the shores of Galilee because a number of them were fishermen. Next...on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day...Jesus went to a wedding.

When Matthew and Rebekah were very young, we had a picture of Jesus framed and we hung it in our bedroom. They grew up with that image of Jesus as a fundamental insight. It is a portrait of Christ. He is not on the cross. He is not carrying a lamb in HIS arms. He is laughing, head thrown back. What we wanted the kids to learn and to know was that Jesus whom we sought to serve was a guy who defined joy and who was the source of our joy. I have quoted Rev. Rebekah several times during this series....Jesus always enjoyed a party! At the wedding, you miss some of the point of the story if you do not think of HIS enjoying the food, drinking the wine, and dancing. HIS faith was serious stuff. And HE was serious about joy.

Jesus is at the wedding because HIS family is to some degree involved. Mary HIS mother was probably the reason HE was on the guest list. The disciples have not crashed

the party, and their presence creates no disturbance. I would suggest to you that when Momma, Mary, accepted the invitation she probably arranged the inclusion of Jesus, and HIS friends. IF the Bethlehem story in Luke and Matthew should teach us anything, it is that Mary was faithful and wise. She was always the first to grasp that Jesus was a special child, a special Son, and she not only thought deeply on those things...she clearly treasured them in her heart. And when the wine runs out at this wedding.... she is concerned enough to speak to Jesus about the problem.

No less a figure than John Calvin speculates that the bridegroom is one of Mary's relatives. He also speculates that she may not have been asking Jesus to solve the problem so much as giving vent to her concern for the bridegroom's reputation. What Calvin does say is that the circumstances are a picture of real life. It is late in the wedding party, when the host would be expected to serve cheaper wine, which would go unnoticed as the result of the consumption of the "good stuff". And wine does run out, in spite of the best plans that people make. "Son," she says to Jesus, "They have no more wine." Jesus reply is so typical of first responses. "Why do you involve me? What do you expect me to do? My time has not yet come." Clearly Jesus knows she knows HE can do something. Even if HE is reticent to do it. Mary does not (notice this) she does not tell Jesus what to do. But she does do something that underlines the insight that she knows her Son's capability to do

something special. She turns to the servants and she says to them. “Do whatever HE tells you.”

Clearly she is close enough to the bridegroom, and their relationship is so recognized that the servants do not argue, and stand ready to act.

Standing against the wall of the room, near its entrance are six stone water jars. These are not little bottles. They can hold between 20 and 30 gallons. They are there for a reason. Each person as he or she entered would have washed their hands in the water. The jars are no longer full, but neither are they empty. You are allowed to giggle if you find this humorous. Jesus does not just make wine out of water. He makes wine out of dirty bath water. “Do what HE tells you,” said Mary. Jesus says, “Fill the jars with water.” And John tells us they filled them to the brim, which is to say it is not that Jesus took some wine and added it to the water, or fermented a batch over the next week. This “filled to the brim” detail is supposed to tell us, what happened next was nothing short of miraculous.

So the servants have filled the jars with water to the point where they are on the verge of overflowing. Then Jesus instructs them to draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet, the man responsible for the food and drink. Among other things, he will be the most sober person at the feast. He is working. He is responsible. He is a manager. He is also the one who knows the nature of the problem at which

they have arrived. The wine for this wedding has been consumed. He has no idea (John tells us so) where this wine came from or its quality. It is probably in a pitcher. No label. No bottle. He tastes it. And here is the surprise. He calls the bridegroom aside and compliments him. "Every one brings out the choice wine first, and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had much to drink, but you have saved the best until now." This act on Jesus part does not just provide more wine. It is better wine. A superior vintage, for which the bridegroom is applauded.

John tells us this was the first miracle of Jesus public ministry. He tells us it took place in Cana of Galilee. Today in Cana of Galilee, not far from Nazareth, not far from Capernaum there stands an ancient church that marks the spot where it is believed that miracle actually occurred. On the main street of Cana there are 5 wine shops. I bought this bottle of wine there, in one of those shops. The label says, "The First Miracle. Cana Wedding Wine." The picture on the label is of Jesus and the servants doing HIS will, pouring water into the clay jars. I brought the bottle just so that you might see...that community takes this matter seriously to this day.

John tells us this was how Jesus revealed HIS glory. The disciples who were there were impressed. They had no doubts about what happened. One moment there was water.... and then there was wine. Gallons and gallons and gallons of delicious, marvelous wine. A poet put it this way..."the

unconscious waters saw their God, and blushed.” All because Jesus was The Guest.

Let us pray;

Lord Jesus our Redeemer. The logic of these times causes us to question the occurrence of miracles. Yet because we know our lives have been touched by YOUR saving grace we believe. YOUR word reminds us that is one more thing we have in common with the disciples of old. We believe, but help us in our moments of unbelief. YOU have shown us and YOU remind us that nothing is impossible for YOU, the Lord our God. Pour out your grace upon us in Jesus name, we ask. Amen