

October 6, 2019 Water To Wine John 2:1-12

John tells us a lot in this little episode, which as one of the disciples of Jesus, he witnessed. First of all they have walked north into the Galilee area. The phrase on the 3rd day with which chapter two begins, is an indication that it was the 3rd day in which they were in Galilee where the towns of Tiberius, Cana and Capernaum are all located. In John's narrative the events unfold in this order. John the Baptist (Jesus cousin) is baptizing people in the River Jordan. He baptizes them on the basis of their repentance of sin, as a new turning to God. Jesus shows up and joins the line of those to be baptized. Following HIS baptism, Jesus calls a number of men to discipleship. Then Jesus leads them to Galilee.

In Cana there is a wedding on the third day of their being in Galilee. The Sea of Galilee is the dominating natural feature of that area of Israel today, as it was in Jesus time. It is the largest body of fresh water in the nation. And it is about the size of the hundreds of fresh water lakes in the northern region of our province of Ontario. It is nowhere close to the size of any of the Great Lakes. However, in a nation that is classified as a desert nation, surrounded by desert nations, this water source is a miracle in itself, of God's grace and one of the great reasons that Israel is referred to in the Bible as a land of milk and honey. Israel has a water. Israel has a lake!

It is important to John that we understand Jesus and the disciples did not just happen upon the wedding. This

3rd day in Galilee they are invited guests not wedding crashers. A wedding in Jewish culture was of course a happy event. And for the Jews, for Jesus, for Jesus followers, a party means there is lots of food and abundance of wine. Because of the fermentation process, wine is safe to drink...water not so much. We need to remember that. Wine was safe to drink, to say nothing of its flavor, its bouquet and so on.

A problem arises. The wine supply has been consumed. There is none left. The person who becomes aware of that problem is Mary the mother of Jesus. When we look closely at the Gospel accounts we find out that Mary is typically present where Jesus is. The reason for that is that Jesus is responsible for her wellbeing in what we assume was widowhood. She is known even in this circle at the wedding as Jesus' mother. Jesus is not famous at this point. His ministry is just beginning. The miracle that takes place at this wedding is Jesus first miracle. John has staked out some territory here whether he was aware of it or not. In his saying this is the first miracle, John is telling us either consciously, or by means of the Holy Spirit, that accounts of childhood miracles are not to be trusted. This is the first "verifiable" miracle of Jesus. It happened shortly after HE arrived in the Galilee area. It happened at a wedding in Cana where to the embarrassment of the bridegroom and his family, the wine for the wedding feast has all been consumed.

We in the Church, Christians, disciples of Jesus have a reputation for being anti-alcohol. And we should never apologize for our being against its abuse. But we need to notice some basic facts. The wine has run out. We would be foolish if we thought no one at the wedding was tipsy. There is no condemnation of what has occurred in the consumption of the wine supply. Mary, Jesus mother, is concerned about the embarrassment of the host family. Jesus does not so much rebuke her for bringing this to HIS attention as this: Jesus reminds her there is only ONE voice HE must obey...His Father's who is in Heaven. And Mary says to the servants at the wedding feast..."Do whatever HE tells you." Obey HIM. She knows Jesus will do something. She knows HE can do something. She has been thinking about signs for HIS entire earthly life.

These things are important. It is not the disciples of Jesus who fill the stone jars to the brim, it is the servants of the wedding feast. That means two things. The water was water. And secondly, there was no room in any of the jars for something else. And think on this...120 to 180 gallons of water. And therefore an equivalent quantity of wine. There is a Biblical case to be made for wine consumption. Responsible consumption.

Finally, this is communion Sunday. We eat the bread, we drink the symbolic wine, of the Lord's Supper. Here is the link for the miracle of Cana...water into wine. Those jars

of water were all about cleansing. Washing your hands to be physically clean. Cleanliness as symbol of Godliness. And then there is the sacrament of the broken bread and the poured out wine. This sacrament is about being cleansed of sin...not because we are morally superior to anyone...but rather because by the grace of God...Jesus took our place on the cross where the judgement of God falls and crushes HIM.

And of course you must never forget this is Sunday. Sunday morning. Always the anniversary of the resurrection of our Saviour. I invite each and every one of you to partake of the Table. The gifts of God for the people of God. Eat and drink and remember: through faith in Jesus you are clean....clean.....clean in the sight of God.

Let us pray;

Heavenly Father;

Broken for me, Broken for you,

The body of Jesus broken for you.

This is my blood I shed for you.

For your forgiveness making you new.

The body of Jesus broken for you. Amen

The above are the words of the chorus and verse 4 of hymn 550. The Book of Praise.