

Second Sunday after the Epiphany; January 19, 2025
"Jesus Shows God's True Glory"
+ John 2:1-11 +

Three days later, there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee. Jesus' mother was there. Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the wedding.

When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no wine."

Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does that have to do with you and me? My time has not yet come."

His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

Six stone water jars, which the Jews used for ceremonial washing, were standing there, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus told them, "Fill the jars with water." So they filled them to the brim. Then he said to them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." And they did.

When the master of the banquet tasted the water that had now become wine, he did not know where it came from (though his servants who had drawn the water knew). The master of the banquet called the bridegroom and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and when the guests have had plenty to drink, then the cheaper wine. You saved the good wine until now!"

This, the beginning of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed in Cana of Galilee. He revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him.

It may be tempting to accuse St. John of burying the lede. After all, he waits all the way to the end to tell you the most important thing about Jesus changing water into wine at the wedding of Cana: Jesus did it to reveal his glory as the Son of God. He did it to show his disciples that they were not following just some upstart rabbi out to ruffle feathers with radical ideas about true godliness starting in the heart and working its way out. No, Jesus was more than a rabbi.

The disciples had heard John the Baptist call him eternal, and they had heard John the Baptist call him the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. They had heard words about Jesus' divinity. Now, they see his divinity in action.

Jesus shows them – he reveals with action that he is the Son of God, and the disciples believe. That's the main point of this Gospel, not just for the Twelve disciples but for the billions who have since followed Jesus by faith: watch him turn water into and know that he is God. Jesus did something that day to give his followers an epiphany, a revelation about who Jesus is: a man who is also God, with divine glory.

Yes, there is no mere man who can turn ordinary water into exquisite wine. That takes a miracle only God can do; it takes the glory of God. But Jesus is teaching us more here! He wants to reveal to us not just that he has God's glory, but also to reveal some things about that glory! I believe that's why St. John waits till the end to tell us what this account is all about. It's so that we won't hear "glory," and just focus on power, but instead see the full definition of God's glory. When we know what God's glory is really all about, then it becomes so much more meaningful for us to know that Jesus has it!

Power is part of glory. Jesus reveals clearly that God's glory, which he has, includes raw power. There is a chemical difference between water and wine, and the laws of the universe prohibit water from suddenly transforming into wine. It can't happen...unless you wrote the laws and have the raw power to defy them.

Jesus' veiled his power when he came into the world; how else could he be nailed to a cross for our sins? But at some special moments, like the wedding at Cana, he lets it shine through. It certainly is raw, divine power. But it's not just raw power.

During the winter storm last week, I made a too-infrequent visit to the fitness center at my apartment complex. As I lumbered away at the treadmill, I saw power all around me. The guy running next to me had biceps about as thick as my head. Behind me there was a woman doing pushups so fast she was a blur. Outside there was a plow moving a ton of snow a minute.

All this power was impressive. But none of it was for me. If I had asked the gentleman next to me, or the woman behind me, to come to my apartment and help me rearrange my furniture, I would have been met with only weird looks. And that plow outside? It turns out that power wasn't for me, either. Indeed, the driver relieved his bucket directly behind my car so it took me almost an hour to dig out the following morning.

Power is one thing. But if it's not for you, it's no good. And this is the true glory of God. John does not end the Gospel saying, "Jesus revealed his power." Instead, **He revealed his glory**. The glory of God is that he is not only powerful, he is powerful for us.

The disciples have heard the words proclaiming who Jesus is. Now they see the action to help and save. They see giant jars filled to the brim; they see partiers partying on; they see a banquet master snap his head back in shock at the quality of this suddenly-appearing wine. They see Jesus' mother smile. And their own faith in Jesus' grows. Because he's not only revealing his power, he's revealing power for his people.

The Bible is full of words about God's power. But here is his glory: he uses his power for us, his people. He uses his power to provide what we need, when we need it. And, as he did at the wedding, his power most often exceeds our needs and overflows with the blessings we need. God's glory is power that causes food to grow and drink to flow for us; it is power that heals illnesses for us and raises us up again to serve.

The disciples saw this glory and believed in Jesus. See it for yourself and believe in him, too. See his power for you, not just in filling your belly and giving you shelter and health, but see his strong arm and clenched fist rescue you. Because the glory of our Savior is not just that he is powerful and that he is powerful for us; he is also powerful to rescue us.

When Jesus turned water into wine, his power was rescuing. His mother Mary was apparently helping to lead the festivities, and clearly it mattered to her enough for things to go well that she appealed to her Son to save the day when the wine ran out. Her timing was off; and the exact timing was between Jesus and the Father. But her timing was just a bit off, as it turns out. And her faith was right on the money. God's glory is using his power to save. He saved his mother that day. He also saved the bride and groom from extreme embarrassment, and the guests from awkwardness and a sour memory. He saved his disciples from any doubts they may have had about his identity. This is the glory Jesus reveals: not just power, not just power for us, but power to rescue us.

What has Jesus used his power to rescue you from? Maybe you can point to a time when you were short on food or drink, when you were cold or ill, and something happened – what a silly way to look at it, that "something just happened." Nothing ever just happens. Jesus rescued you.

Jesus' ministry is just beginning as he attends the wedding at Cana. But you can tell he is already looking forward to its end. He knows that his heavenly Father has an exact plan, precise timing. Jesus has to perform this miracle at just the time and in just the right way to fit into his Father's plan. This is because Jesus has come to rescue many more than wedding revelers, his mother, and his disciples. And he's come to rescue from things much more serious than lack of wine and a ruined reception. He has come to take away the sin of the world. **"My time has not yet come."** He has come to live an entire life according to his Father's plan in every way. **When the master of banquet tasted the water that had now become wine...** He has come to have water and blood pour from his own side. **Six stone water jars, which the Jews used for ceremonial cleansing...** He has come to provide the cleansing from sin that those stone water jars pictured.

It begs belief that the Holy Spirit provided these details for no purpose. At the very least, they remind us of our Savior's greatest rescue. This is God's glory: not just that he is powerful, and powerful for us, and powerful to rescue us from temporary, worldly problems. It is to take away the sin of the world and to rescue us and all who believe from eternal damnation. It is to open the door to the wedding banquet of heaven, to the marriage supper of the Lamb. There all who believe in him will celebrate not for a week or two as they did at Cana. At that wedding supper our cup will overflow into eternity. There was a lot of wine at Cana, after Jesus put his power to work. But heaven's supply will be infinite, because Jesus used his divine power to rescue us from sin and hell, and to set our place at his wedding feast in heaven.

His glory is power, power that rescues us from problems small and large, temporary and eternal. But there is something else under it all. If you were listening closely to Paul's words to the Ephesians, you find what pushes God to define his glory this way. What is it, at the foundation of God's glory, that wraps himself in human flesh? What is it that takes divinity out to a tiny town for a wedding celebration? What is it that looks into his mother's eyes and decides, "I will save this situation"? What is it that cares about a bride and groom and a feast, nothing in the grand scheme of world history? What makes him care about it? **I pray, Paul writes, that you would be able to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled to all the fullness of God.**

The glory of God is full of love. Full of love for the people at that wedding, he used his power for them and saved the day, giving them all they needed and more than they could have wanted. Full of love for all people, he uses his power for us to provide what we need and more every day, rescuing us from all need and, to be honest, most wants. Full of love for all people, he uses his power to rescue us from hell and welcome us to the heavenly banquet.

This is the glory the disciples saw, and it caused them to put their faith in Jesus. It wasn't just raw power. It was power for them, power to save, power fueled by love. See God's true glory in Jesus, and put your faith in him. Amen.