

Rev. Dan Welch Epiphany 2 1-16-22 Text- John 2: 1- 11

Getting to talk with the children during the Children's messages is definitely one of the favorite parts of my job. It's always interesting to me to find out how they look at the world and how they process God's Word. What's more, you just never know what they're going to say!

That reminds me of a true story from a few years ago. The setting was a late-night talk show and the host, the late-great Johnny Carson, is talking with an eight-year-old boy. This young man was invited to come on the show because amazingly, he had rescued two friends in a coal mine outside his hometown in West Virginia. As Johnny questioned the boy, it became apparent to him and the audience that this young man was a Christian. So, Mr. Carson asked the boy if he attended Sunday school. When he said that he did, Johnny inquired, "What are you learning in Sunday school?" "Last week," came his reply, "our lesson was about when Jesus went to a wedding and turned water into wine." The audience started to laugh expecting Johnny to say something amusing about the consumption of alcohol, but Johnny tried to keep a straight face. Then he asked, "And what did you learn from that story?" The boy squirmed in his chair. It was pretty clear he hadn't thought about this. But then he lifted up his head and said, "If you're going to have a wedding, make sure you invite Jesus!" ***That*** drew the laughs!

And you know that young Christian was on to something. Weddings are times of joy! And joy is something God wants each and every one of us to have, whether we're at a wedding or not. What better way for Jesus to demonstrate His desire for us to be filled with joy than to perform His first miracle in this way and in this setting. So, let's dig into our text this morning from John chapter 2.

The wedding that Jesus attended that day was in a little town called Cana. At this wedding there was already joy, but a problem soon developed. On the third day of the week-long feast, the wine ran out. Now not only was that a social embarrassment, but it was also seen as a bad sign. For a wedding to run out of wine was seen by the Jews of that time as an omen that there was little chance of this marriage reaching its full potential, maybe joy just was not meant for this couple.

But then, Jesus' mother enters on to the scene. Now Mary observes what is happening and she wants to spare the host family this great embarrassment. So, she approaches her son for help. Jesus was also there to celebrate this joyful time with the young couple and guests. By this time Jesus was no longer that 12-year-old boy talking with teachers in Jerusalem's temple. Now He was a full grown man and Mary knew that Jesus could help this situation. In fact, she had so much confidence in Him that Mary simply tells the attendants: "Do whatever He tells you." What amazing words of faith!

There's a lot for us to learn here. As we are all painfully aware, there are many things in life that can rob us of joy. Sometimes these things are outside of our control, like an illness or a bad accident. But, more often than not we rob *ourselves* of joy, the *wonderful* joy God wants us to have, when we doubt His Word and fail to trust Him that He has a very good plan for our lives.

We, that is all people, have a tendency; in fact, a *bad habit* of sitting in judgment over God's Word. To be sure, as long as the Bible says things that we agree with or that make sense to us, there's no problem at all. But, if the Holy Scripture says something that we don't like, like forbidding us from doing some sinful activity which we happen to find enjoyable or beneficial, then that can become a problem for us. In short, there's a part of us that doesn't like being told "no". "No, it's not right to abuse alcohol. No, it's wrong and also sinful to cheat on your taxes or be unfaithful to your spouse or to spread gossip." For some, that's when God's commands are either ignored or explained away.

We would *expect* a reaction of doubt and unbelief from people who *aren't* Christians, but it's troubling when we hear or see such reactions from those who bear the name of Christ. There's no doubt about it, God's Words of Law can sometimes be hard for us to stomach, hard for us to take to heart. But we need to trust our Lord that He has a very good plan for our lives with the Law He has given us to follow.

King David says it so well in Psalm 19:7-9: "The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;

the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether.”

This brings us back to our text today when Mary tells the attendants at the feast, “Do whatever Jesus tells you.” The lesson that we learn here is that when we do trust God’s Son and His Word, it will lead to the best possible result for our life, and on top of that it will bring us joy! That’s the main point today. That’s the bottom line.

We see a wonderful example in Jesus’ mother. Mary’s faith and trust in God is so clear to see from the first moment we catch a glimpse of her in the Bible. Remember when she heard the amazing news from the angel that God had chosen her to give birth to His Son. Mary responded, “I am the Lord’s servant. May it be to me as you have said.” What a beautiful statement of faith. In today’s Gospel lesson she delivers another memorable line of faith and trust in God when she tells the attendants at the wedding feast, “Do whatever Jesus tells you.”

And that’s exactly what they did. Nearby there were six stone water-jars, each holding from 20 to 30 gallons. Jesus told them to fill the jars with water. To their ears that must have sounded like a strange thing to ask. After all they were out of **wine** at this feast, not **water**. Still, they did what Jesus said to do. Then Jesus told them, “Draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet.” Now this might have seemed even stranger and a tougher thing to do. Was Jesus trying to make fools out of them? Was He trying to get them in trouble with the master of the banquet? How could they go to banquet master with water when he was expecting to taste wine? Sounds like a good way for a worker to get into big trouble, maybe even fired! The attendants didn’t understand any of this, but Mary had told them, “Do whatever he tells you.”. And whether it **made sense** or not... they **did** everything Jesus told them to do.

What happens next? “The master of the banquet **tasted** the water that had been turned into **wine**.” But there’s more. The water had not only been turned into wine, but it was **excellent** wine, **choice** wine-**expensive** wine. It was the custom of the day to serve the very best wine, the most expensive wine, at the beginning of the feast. And then as the

banquet went on, the lesser wine would be brought out because by then the guests would no longer be able to tell the difference. But, the master of the banquet, who could not drink while he was on duty, said of this wine: “Everyone brings out the choice wine first, and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now.” And with six stone jars, there would be about 150 gallons for the feast. Of course, he didn’t know where the wine came from... but the servants did. Mary did. And the disciples knew, too. Because of what they saw, they “put their faith in Him.” After seeing 150 gallons of water turned into wine, how could the disciples ever *not* do whatever Jesus told them to do?

With Jesus turning water into wine, I couldn’t help but think of the water of Baptism and the wine in the Lord’s Supper. Mary said, “Do whatever he tells you.” They did and Jesus performed a miracle. Jesus has told us to be baptized and to receive His Supper. And when we do what He tells us to do, Jesus does even greater miracles than changing water into wine.

To the human eye, Holy Baptism, seems like such a simple ceremony: A little water poured on the head and the words are spoken, “In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Yet it truly is a miracle each time it happens (like we saw God do for Clara today): In the waters of our baptism all our sin, the sins of yesterday, today, and tomorrow, were all forgiven, washed away, as Peter says in Acts 2:38: “Be baptized... for the forgiveness of your sins.” In our baptism, we receive the Holy Spirit and are given a brand new life as Paul says in Titus 3:5: “(God) saved us... by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.” Finally, in 1 Peter 3:21, the apostle Peter summarizes all the blessings of baptism by saying: “Baptism now saves you.”

Mary said, “do whatever He tells you”, and Jesus turned water into wine. The same Jesus tells us to “baptize in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” When we do what He says, He gives us what we need for our salvation from sin, death, and the devil as Jesus gives to us personally the forgiveness of sins He won for us through His perfect life, atoning death on the cross, and resurrection from the dead.

And how about the Lord's Supper? Jesus did a great miracle by turning water into wine at Cana, but in His Supper, He does an even greater miracle today: With the bread and wine He gives us His Body and Blood for the forgiveness of sins. How does this happen? No one can fully explain it. Just like no one at the wedding feast could explain how by the power of His Word Jesus changed water into wine, we can't explain how through His Word He changes the bread and wine of His Supper so that, in addition to plain, ordinary bread and wine we also receive His body broken and His blood poured out on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins. We don't understand **how** this happens, by faith we simply know that it **does**. St. Paul affirms this in 1 Corinthians chapter 10, "The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the Blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the Body of Christ?" (vv. 16-17). At the wedding at Cana Jesus gives wine for temporary earthly joy and celebration. But in His Supper, Jesus gives us His Body and Blood with bread and wine for a spiritual and **eternal** joy!

Today Jesus has invited us to look deeper within the miracle at Cana. He wants to lift us out of the plain, ordinary, every-day world and give us joy. To have this joy, it takes faith, faith like Mary's that says, "Do whatever He tells you to do."

Water into wine. Water delivering from sin, death, and the devil in baptism. Bread and wine giving the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ for forgiveness and life. Human reason will reject all of them as impossible. But faith... well, faith is different. Faith accepts all three because of the One Who does them: **Jesus**. Mary, told the servants: "Do whatever He tells you." They did and they saw the glory of Jesus turning water into wine. And we read that after this miracle, "His disciples put their faith in Him." Mary's advice is just as valid for us: "Do whatever He tells you." He has told us to be baptized and to receive His Supper over and over again as we journey on this earth. And as we do what He says He fills us with joy now and forever! Amen.