

The Second Sunday after Epiphany
January 17 - 18, 2009
John 2:1-11
Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church

In the Name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The account of Jesus at the wedding feast in Cana is often used as an example of the high place Jesus gives to the sanctity of marriage or how He often gives much more than we sinners either desire or deserve. It is true that Jesus honors marriage, after all, He is the One who instituted and sanctified marriage. It is also true that Jesus gives to all His creation, both the evil and the good, much more than they deserve, after all, He gives us life and salvation when what we really deserve is death and condemnation, Saint John does not tell this story of Jesus at the wedding feast for those reasons. St. John relates what happened that day for one purpose and one purpose alone.

"... but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name." (John 20:31)

St. John tells us, "This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him." (John 2:11) But John does not speak of signs as we think of them. Often, we think of signs as symbols or something that symbolically stands in the place of something else. For St. John, this is not the case. For St. John the word "sign" really means something that points to, or is somehow linked with, something else. Quite literally, the Greek word which we translate as "sign," here means, "mystery." In the same way, "mystery" in Latin, is translated as "sacrament." A sacrament is a mystery and a mystery is a sign that points to something or reveals something hidden from ordinary sight.

So, these "signs" in Holy Scripture, reveal something that you wouldn't otherwise know or recognize unless someone or something revealed them to you. A "sign" is something like a gift waiting to be opened. Martin Luther tells us God gives signs to us as something visible for our faith to hold onto. So it is that the Lord's holy gifts of Baptism and His Supper, visible in lowly water and simple bread and wine, are Signs, Mysteries, Sacraments. They point to Jesus because they are linked to Jesus. They are signs of Christ Jesus' real bodily presence among us as Creator and Redeemer. In these signs we experience the death

Jesus died to give us life.

Now, do not misunderstand me. I am not saying that every time Jesus performs a miracle we have a new Sacrament. What I am saying is that Jesus' miracles are sacramental in nature. They are sacramental signs that point to Him and reveal Him as the Son of God. These signs point to spiritual truth. The truth of the Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One who took on our flesh, lived among us, and experienced everything that we experience. They reveal Jesus, who while fully human and like us in every way, except without sin, is also fully God. These miracles are signs, visible sacramental manifestations that reveal Jesus for who He really is, namely, the Word made Flesh, who created all things and who upholds all things in Himself. They reveal the glory of the One and only Son of God, Jesus Christ.

This is how Jesus has chosen to reveal himself to you and to come to you, in signs in which his word resides, but there is a problem. The problem is not in the signs. The problem is that these are not the signs that we would chose. We are an evil and adulterous generation, which seeks after all kinds of signs, just not the signs that Jesus has given to us. Therefore we would seek Jesus in heartfelt emotions which lift us to heaven so that we can "feel" his presence, while we despise his presence in water, word, bread, and wine. We pray for signs from God instead of relying on the signs he has already provided. We are afraid that Jesus will not do what he has promised unless we see or experience some sort of miraculous sign.

Because of that fear, because we can't find comfort in what Jesus has already given, we often seek Jesus in the Law. But the Law is empty. It cannot save; it can only accuse and destroy. We have drunk this inferior wine to the dregs and still, we are not satisfied. The jars are empty and all we find is pain, despair, sickness, and death.

But Jesus comes to fulfill the Law...completely...to the brim. Just as there are six jars to be filled, so Jesus on the sixth day of the week fulfills all the Law and the Prophets. Just as man was created on the sixth day, so the Creator recreates His creation on the sixth day with His holy Body and Blood. He dies on His Cross and is placed in His grave. It is finished. His hour has come.

Still, that is not the end of the story. The One, who has died, is no longer dead; He lives! The new and greater Jonah, after spending three days in the belly of the earth gives us

His greatest sign. The grave is empty. He is not there. Jesus lives! He has filled the law to the brim and our cup runs over. He replaces the Law and the old Covenant with a new and better wine. We are not purified by the Law, but by His Blood. The risen Body of Christ is the beginning of the new order of things. In Him and through Him creation is renewed and revitalized. Although the renewal is perceived now only by faith, we see signs of it in the miracles and the Sacraments which Jesus has given to us.

These signs, Jesus continues to provide, as he does this day, signs which point to Him. He has provided to you mysteries in the holy Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. There, Jesus is hidden in lowly water and simple bread and wine. In these miracles, He is revealed to you. In the Sacraments, Jesus, who revealed at Cana that He is Lord of the elements, continues to reveal Himself as Lord over all creation.

In the waters of Baptism Jesus makes you His own. It is not that the waters of Baptism are any better than plain water; in fact, they are plain water, except that Jesus has added His Word and commandment to it. (Martin Luther's Large Catechism) As He turned the water into wine, with His Word and by His command, He also gave water the power to redeem you. For is it not written, "Baptism...now saves you..." (1 Peter 3:21)? Baptism is a washing of regeneration. (Titus 3:5) In Baptism is a recreation of that which was dead in sin. Baptism recreates you to newness of life in Christ Jesus.

In the same manner The Lord's Super is a sign of your redemption in Jesus Christ. Is it not written that the Blood of Jesus cleanses us from sin? The miracle of Jesus' true Body and true Blood under the elements of bread and wine reveals the mystery of your salvation in a blessed and holy sacramental union with Jesus. It is as though Jesus takes you as His Bride and the two become one flesh.

Our Lord revealed to us, and to the world, who He is that day at the wedding celebration in Cana. In this "beginning of signs" Jesus points us to the restoration of creation which He would accomplish on the great "third day," Easter Morning. Through His first miracle, indeed, through all His miracles, Jesus manifested His glory and revealed to us a foretaste of what was to come, the restoration of our life in our God as it is meant to be.

Jesus has given to you, a sign. At Cana, at Calvary, in the font, and on the altar, Jesus gives to you a sign of His glory. And His glory revealed is also a sign, a sign of His love for you. At Cana, in the font, and on the altar, our Lord has given us signs of the renewed

creation won for us on the Cross at Calvary. These signs are renewed here every Lord's day. Every Sunday in this nave is a sign, a mystery, a sacrament, revealing the glory of Jesus Christ. Here Jesus reveals that His life and death are yours. Every Sunday Jesus reveals that His Body was given for you and His Blood was shed for you for the remission of your sins. Jesus reveals to you His glory, the glory of His death for your righteousness. This Divine Service is His wedding party given for you. He is the Groom, the Wine Steward, and the Wine. You are the Bride and the honored guest.

So now let us do as Mary has advised, "Whatever He says to you, do it." (John 2:5) Jesus says "take eat; take drink, for in this humble bread and wine I have hidden Myself to give you life." Do this and remember you have heard Jesus say, "I forgive you all your sins." In the Name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.