

Sermon for January 17, 2016 – 2nd Sunday after Epiphany

John 2:1-11 (NIV84)

Theme: ***In Vino Jesu Veritas: Four Truths we can learn from Jesus turning water into wine.***

1. *A truth about asking Jesus.*
2. *A truth about faith.*
3. *A truth about Jesus' compassion.*
4. *A truth about hidden miracles.*

On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, ² and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. ³ When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine." ⁴ "Dear woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My time has not yet come." ⁵ His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." ⁶ Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons. ⁷ Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim. ⁸ Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." They did so, ⁹ and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside ¹⁰ and said, "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." ¹¹ This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.

In vino veritas is a Latin saying meaning "in wine is truth." If you give a person enough wine, you can often learn things you otherwise wouldn't.

Today, however, I am using this Latin phrase in a much different sense. The first miracle recorded of Jesus' public ministry was changing water into wine; and it reveals important facts about our relationship with Jesus. Let us consider some of them, under the theme: ***In Vino Jesu Veritas: Four Truths we can learn from Jesus turning water into wine.*** 1) *A truth about asking Jesus.* 2) *A truth about faith.* 3) *A truth about Jesus' compassion.* 4) *A truth about hidden miracles.*

Part One: A truth about asking Jesus

Our sermon text takes place shortly after Jesus' baptism, less than a week after he called his first disciples. We read:

On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, ² and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding.

Based on how Mary's role is described at this feast, it seems as if she were more than a mere guest. Could this wedding have been for a relative of Jesus? It's very possible. Whatever the case, Mary cared deeply for the hosts – and so did Jesus, as we will soon see.

Ancient Jewish wedding feasts were more than just one-day events. Due to the distance people had to travel, they were week-long affairs – full of feasting, joy and conversation. If you keep this in mind, you can understand how easy it would be to run out of food or drink.

We read: *When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine."*

Why did Jesus' mother do this? I am convinced it's because she knew who her Son was and had been patiently waiting for him to reveal himself to the world. For 30 years Jesus kept his identity a secret, but now, at his baptism, God the Father publicly anointed him with the Holy Spirit and declared that he was his Son. Jesus was gathering disciples for himself. The stage was all set, so why shouldn't Jesus reveal his true nature here, in front of his family and friends?

And so Mary, trusting in her Son's power and compassion, merely mentions to him the fact that there is no wine.

Here, therefore, is the first truth I would like us to consider from this account: what is the proper way to ask Jesus for something? Much can be learned from Mary. How did she approach Jesus? In full confidence of who he was. She did not let thoughts of whether or not Jesus "would" or "could" answer her request prevent her from making it. She also did not demand specifics as to how Jesus should answer her. All she did was mention the problem – simply laying it before him - and let him decide to do what is best.

What an example for us! Jesus wants us to humbly lay our requests before him in prayer – trusting in his mercy and love. We can ask Him for anything; even for the things we might consider unimportant, like being saved from embarrassment for a minor social indiscretion. Jesus loves it when we have the faith to do this – not pushing our own agendas or timetables, but always open to the good and gracious answer he will give as our Savior and God.

The way Mary asked Jesus teaches us this important truth. Let us see how he answered.

Part Two: A truth about faith

"Dear woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied.

"Why does Jesus call his mother "dear woman" instead of Mom? Isn't that being disrespectful?" Consider Jesus' response in its proper perspective: it is not the response of a son talking to his mother, but of the LORD speaking to His creation.

Jesus also knows the "unspoken reason" Mary mentioned the wine to him, which was more than just saving the hosts from embarrassment. She wanted Jesus to finally reveal himself as the Messiah. This is why Jesus responded the way he did: *"My time has not yet come,"* he tells her.

That is to say: when the time is right for me to publicly reveal my glory, I will. That time, however, has been set by God the Father to accomplish His will and cannot be changed.

The fact that Jesus called her “dear woman” seemed to comfort Mary more than offend her. How? Because she recognized his response was not that of a son to a mother, but as a Savior to his disciple. In his time he would do what is best! Comforted by this thought she got ready for whatever action he chose.

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

Here is the second truth we can learn from this account: what it means to have faith. Mary, yet again, serves as a wonderful example. Even though it may have seemed as if Jesus didn't care to answer her request, she trusted that he did and made herself ready to any response he would make. So should we when we pray.

Often times we get frustrated because Jesus does not give us a definite answer to our requests. When this happens we are tempted to doubt. Instead of us being ready to do whatever He tells us, we want him to be ready to do what we tell him. But this is not right and reveals a lack of faith.

Learn from Mary's example: if Jesus does not answer our prayer in the time and way we want, don't worry. Be like Mary and trust that, whatever he does, it will be for our good. And be ready for his answer. Be ready to do whatever he tells you - trusting in His compassion.

Part Three: A Truth about Jesus' compassion

⁶ *Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.* ⁷ *Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim.* ⁸ *Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." They did so,* ⁹ *and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine.*

The act of filling those 20-30 gallon jars with water was, in and of itself, nothing special. Water was constantly used for ceremonial washings. The servants may have merely thought Jesus was merely getting water ready for some purification rite. But when Jesus then told them to take some to the master of the Banquet, they must have wondered what Jesus was doing.

What Jesus was doing was expressing compassion. In a world of problems, running out of choice drink at a party where people are otherwise well fed does not seem like it would occupy the top of God's to-do list. And even though it would cause nothing more than minor embarrassment for the hosts, Jesus had compassion: both on his mother and on the bridal pair.

And the truth to be learned here is this: Jesus has compassion for us – even in the littlest thing. We should never think that something is too small to take to him in prayer. And if Jesus is compassionate when we face small problems, how can we not trust his mercy in regards to the major trials we face? If he helps us in the little things, how will he not help us with the big?

Yes, our Savior is most certainly compassionate - even going so far as to suffer and die on the cross for our sins. And if God has done this for us in Christ, *how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?* (Romans 8:32, NIV84) We, therefore, have every reason to trust in Jesus' compassion.

Part Four: A truth about hidden miracles

The master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside ¹⁰ and said, "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." ¹¹ This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.

A great miracle had taken place. It should have made headline news - but almost no one knew it happened. Only those who already looked to Jesus in faith were able to perceive it. Who were they? Jesus' mother, the servants who trusted and did what Jesus commanded, and the 6 disciples Jesus had previously called. Their faith was strengthened. But to the rest, Jesus remained a mystery.

And here is the last truth I would like for us to consider this morning: the truth about hidden miracles. Faithful Christians have a totally different world view than the rest of humanity. The people of this world can't even begin to comprehend the compassion Jesus has for them. The unbeliever sees the food he eats as a result of his labor; the believer, however, sees it as a gift of God's love. The unbeliever sees his health as a result of his efforts, the believer as a miracle of God's protection. The unbeliever sees recovery from an illness as a result of human science; the believer praises God for his undeserved healing.

Hidden miracles of protection and providence are around us every day. For some of us who have struggle financially, we might remember how, when things seemed darkest, all of a sudden a needed rebate check or tax break came through to help us at just the right moment. Others might remember how, when we needed it most, some stranger offered us needed encouragement, or some music or event directed our thoughts to God's promises.

But the greatest of all of God's hidden miracles is the forgiveness and salvation Jesus won for us on His cross. He has paid for the sins of every person on this earth, regardless whether or not they perceive it. Sadly, however, most people are blind to this great miracle of compassion. They don't want to believe and therefore do not see it.

Praise God that he has revealed it to us through the preaching of his Gospel. By means of his Holy Spirit working through Word and Sacrament, God has awakened faith in our hearts to know Jesus for who he truly is. And this faith changes us. No longer do we look at things from a

worldly point of view, but understand that God is active everywhere, working in all things for the benefit of those who love him.

In vino Jesu veritas – In Jesus' miracle of wine is truth. What are these truths? To humbly ask Jesus for anything - even if it may seem insignificant; to trust that Jesus will answer – ready to do whatever he says; to know that Jesus has great compassion for us; and finally to rejoice in all the hidden miracles Jesus performs in our life – especially the miracle of moving our hearts to repent and believe in him for the forgiveness of our sins. May the LORD ever lead us to be thankful for our Savior's great compassion, helping us express our gratitude like Jesus' first disciples: in dedicating our lives to him. Amen.