

## “When the Wine Ran Out”

John 2: 1-11

I have a confession to make. I have never really liked this story. Sure I know that this is Jesus’ first miracle in the Gospel of John. And yes, I know that it has some great symbolism which is supposed to help inspire my faith. I know that John wants us to see the phrase “On the third day” and immediately think this is a resurrection story, to immediately think transformation, to immediately think something new is beginning. I know that John uses the phrase “on the third day” and immediately we are supposed to think “on the third day, Jesus rose from the dead”. I know all this but still I have to say I have never really liked this story.

Maybe it is because I don’t like the way Jesus talks to his mom when he says, “Woman, what concern is that to you and me?” I want to say to him, “Jesus, she is only pointing out that they are out of wine. Why are you snapping at her like that? Like any good Southerner, I know you don’t talk to your mama like that- that is not unless you mind getting your mouth washed out with soap or getting one of those looks, you know those looks which let you know you are in big trouble and you are going to get it when we get home.

Or maybe the reason that I have never really liked this story is because of the miracle itself. In fact, John doesn’t even call it a miracle. He calls it a sign. We

are told that this is the first of Jesus' signs. John uses language which adds to the mystery surrounding this event and in doing so, only adds to my confusion.

And if that wasn't enough for me to not like this story, I have to admit I have always wondered what exactly is the point of this first sign. It is not like any of the other instances in the Gospel of John. In those instances, people's lives were changed. People who were blind could now see. People who were lame were given the ability to walk again. People who needed healing received healing. But in this supposed first sign, what we call Jesus' first miracle in the Gospel of John, nothing really changes.

Think about it...no one except the disciples and the servants know that something has even taken place. All we know is that Jesus tells the servants to fill up the jars with water, which they do. Then he tells them to take the jars to the steward who realizes that it is very good wine, that this excellent vintage should have been served first. He even goes one step farther by stating out loud to all who could hear, that normally everyone serves the good wine first, and then pulls out the Boone's Farm after the guests have become drunk. But these people have saved the best for last. Talk about being uncomfortable. Can you imagine being a guest at this wedding?

Again, yes I know that commentators have said for years how embarrassing for the family this would have been for them to run out of wine at the wedding. Again, I have heard all the commentators say what a disgrace it would have been not only for the family but for the community as well for this to have this happen, Because well in those days, since the party was going to last for days and days, the community helped out. They chipped in. They brought food and drink to the celebration. So it says something about the community and its support for this family as well that the wedding ran out of wine. Again, I know all this but come on really, Really....John wants us to believe that for Jesus' first sign, that for Jesus' first act in his ministry, he is going to turn water into wine, a miracle, a sign if you will, John want us to believe that Jesus' first act in ministry is something that no one sees, that is in response to no request, and fills no one's need or wish! If you ask me, that doesn't seem like the best PR in the world if you are trying to make a statement as the Son of God!?

Maybe instead of this story being known as the Wedding at Cana, it should have been called, the Miracle that Wasn't.... because after all, no one saw it happening. No one know what was going on. All the people knew is that some sort of transformation took place. All we are really ever told is that the disciples saw this sign and believed. All we are told is that Jesus revealed his glory. But how? Just exactly how did Jesus reveal his glory?

No lives were changed. No one is made whole. No one confesses Jesus to be the Son of God. All we know is one minute there is no wine and then the next there is more than enough wine to go around, there is more than enough wine to keep the party going for days, there is more than enough wine to keep the celebration going. But just exactly how does this sign reveal Jesus' glory?

Maybe that's it. Maybe that's the real reason I don't like this story. It leaves me wondering. It leaves me wanting more. Maybe the real reason I don't like this story is because I want Jesus to announce himself in his first sign you know, something big, something spectacular, something that makes the people pay attention. Maybe the real reason I don't like this story is because I want Jesus to do something that changes lives, that makes the people understand that the Kingdom of God is here, front and center. Maybe the real reason I don't like this story is because when Jesus performs his first sign, I want him to be the Son of God that I have come to expect him to be. Yet all he does is simply bring about a transformation that everyone misses... Well almost everyone. The disciples saw this sign and believed. The ones who had accepted the invitation to come and see saw this sign and believed. The ones who had experienced God's grace in their lives saw this miracle that wasn't and believed.

And as I have continued on my journey of faith, I have come to discover that is exactly the point of Jesus' first sign, and all the other signs he performs in the

Gospel of John. Jesus is pointing to the Word made Flesh in our midst. You see, the true transformation of the Gospel story, the story which tells us about God's love and grace through the gift of Jesus Christ, the true transformation of this story is us as the people of God. As we become something new, as we become the people God created and calls us to be, the true transformation of the Gospel story comes to life. The Word Made Flesh becomes real in and through our lives. As the ones who have experienced the life giving, life transforming gift of God's love in our lives, now we become the sign, pointing to the Kingdom of God in our midst. Now we become the light of the world for all to see so that all will know that the darkness will not overcome it.

That's why John tells this story, John wants us to understand that the Kingdom of God and the Gospel message are a part of a whole mysterious and wonderful story which is always unfolding, which is always transforming, which is always inviting us to come and see what God is doing in our midst.

Sure, these things may not come with flashing lights, grabbing our attention while shouting out loud and clear, "This is a sign from God. Pay attention!" But they do happen. They just may be a little bit more subtle than we expect. But they do happen. These are extraordinary, ordinary miracles happen each and every day. They are gifts of life given to us as God's Beloveds, gifts which free us, gifts which heal us, glimpses of God's grace in our lives, glimpse which invite us to

continue the celebration of life with joy and thanksgiving. Because they act as signs, pointing out the many, many ways God is still at work in our world, bringing healing and wholeness to all of God's creation.

For John, the point and purpose of this sign is to get us ready to expect the unexpected in Jesus' ministry here on earth. John wants us to realize that each moment of our lives is full of potential. In every moment of our lives, we have the capacity to experience the Kingdom of God in our midst. As Beloved children of God, we simply need to open our eyes and see, open our hearts and experience the signs of God's Kingdom in our midst and believe.

Sure Jesus could have snapped his fingers at that wedding celebration and done something really miraculous. He could have had wine flowing down the walls, and the light of God blazing in the midst of that celebration, but that was not the point. What is the point is the transformation. What is important for John and for us as Jesus' disciples, is that we embrace the invitation for all to come and see what God is doing in our midst. As ones who have experienced the life changing grace of God in our lives, what is important is our celebration of how the Word Made Flesh makes us new today and all days as Beloved children of God.

You see, again, for John, and for us, Jesus came to reveal the will of God for the people of God. He did this by meeting with the people in ordinary ways. He

broke bread with them at the table. He taught them about the love of God. He embraced them as children of God. He did this by meeting them in and through their everyday ordinary moments of their lives. Jesus did this because Jesus understood that every moment of every day is an opportunity to experience the miracles of God if we would only open our eyes to the glory of God that surrounds us every day of our lives.

And that good news is as true today as it was back then. Ordinary miracles still happen. Signs still fill our lives as they point us in the direction of God's peace and justice. Transformations still take place. Ordinary miracles happening to and for ordinary people, like you and me. And when we truly pay attention to these things, they reveal the glory of God in our midst, creating something new, marking a change, and pointing us all in the direction of God's justice and peace.

Or let me say it this way...As I was preparing this week, I came across an article about MLK and how he was so inspired by Rosa Parks that he gained strength and became the voice of the Civil Rights Movement. The article shared how an ordinary woman experienced a miraculous transformation, a transformation no one could really see take place, a transformation that was not big or flashy, a transformation that really began with the word no. No, she would not give up her seat. No she would not move to the back of the bus. No she would not be bullied anymore because she was a person of worth. that miracle, that amazing

transformation, that changing of bitter injustice into the sweet tasting wine of justice. This miracle which wasn't took place on an ordinary bus. Not many people knew the details of what exactly happened but those who saw this miracle, this sigh, well they believed, and the glory of the Lord was revealed.

Thanks be to God. Amen.