**Second Sunday after Epiphany**

**Sunday January 16, 2022**

**“He revealed his glory” (John 2:1-12)**

The closing verse of this morning’s Gospel lesson conveys the major theme of the passage, “*Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him*” (2:11). The miraculous transformation of water into wine provided his disciples with an initial glimpse of Jesus’ glory and they responded appropriately by believing in him. Jesus’ miracles were intended to inspire faith in him. At the same time, Jesus’ miraculous signs communicate a deeper message about his character and mission. There are significant details within this passage that reveal some profound theological ideas about Jesus. This Scripture is very timely because in this season of Epiphany, we need to be open to what Jesus wants to reveal to us. Like those first disciples, we want to see Jesus, behold his glory, and put our trust in him. While this offers us great hope, it also brings an important challenge, for when Christ comes into our lives, he always brings change and transformation. In other words, he turns our water into wine.

The water into wine miracle in John chapter two marks the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry according to the Gospel of John. From the very start of his public ministry, Jesus’ words and deeds signaled a new beginning for the entire world. His presence among us constituted a momentous event as divine grace and truth flowed through him. The incarnation was the ultimate act of divine revelation to humanity. John 1:18 reads, “*No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known*.” In John’s Gospel a major means for the revelation of Jesus is the *sign.* For instance, in John 2:11 the miracle of the transformation of the water into wine is described as a *sign* (2:11). Furthermore, it is the first of seven miraculous signs that occur in the first half of the Gospel (2:1-11; 4:46-54; 5:1-15; 6:1-15; 9; 11). All seven signs are similar in that they are miraculous occurrences that prompt faith in Jesus and reveal his power over space, time, nature, suffering and death. Yet they also work on a much deeper level, revealing significant details about the person and the work of Christ. There is more to these signs than first meets the eye.

For example, in the Gospel’s fourth sign, Jesus feeds a hungry crowd in the wilderness by miraculously multiplying a boy’s lunch into a large feast (6:1-15). The well-fed crowd recognized the miraculous nature of this event and began to regard Jesus as someone special. Yet Jesus became frustrated with crowd’s lack of insight for they failed to perceive the true significance of the sign. He declared to them, “*You are looking for me not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill*” (6:26). The crowd had a superficial understanding of the sign of the multiplied bread; they had eaten a good meal and were looking for more. But the real meaning of the sign went beyond the physical level to a more profound spiritual level. The miracle of the loaves was meant to teach the multitude about the real hunger in their lives. It was intended to point them to the true source of nourishment – Jesus, the Bread of Life who provides abundant and eternal life for all who trust in him (6:35-51).

Let’s now turn our attention to this first sign and discover what it reveals about Jesus. The story begins at a wedding feast in Cana, a town in the Galilean hill country, about nine miles north of Nazareth. Jesus, his mother, and his disciples were all invited to the festivities (2:1, 2). However, as the celebrations carried on, a huge problem arose – the supply of wine had run out. Mary mentions this to Jesus, but it is unclear what her motivation for doing this was. Did she expect Jesus to do something about this or was she simply informing him of the dire situation that had arisen? While this is unclear, Jesus’ response implies that he felt that some action was expected on his part. Jesus responded, “*Dear woman, that’s not our problem. My time has not yet come*” (2:4). His cryptic statement about “*my time*” or “*my hour*” is significant. Within John’s Gospel the phrase “*my hour*” refers to the culmination of Jesus’ earthly ministry - his passion, death, resurrection, and ascension. According to John, in this cycle of events the glory of Jesus is fully revealed to the world. So, here in this first sign, we see a dramatic foreshadowing of that hour.

After Mary asks the wedding servants to heed Jesus’ instructions, the chain of events leading up to this miraculous first sign begins (2:5). The focus now shifts to *six stone water jars* that were used for Jewish purification rituals (2:6). When the weddings guests first arrived, they were ritually unclean, so they needed water to purify their hands and feet. More devout people would use the water pots for purification between each course of the meal. According to purity regulations, *stone* containers were preferable over clay due to their impermeability. So, these stone water jars were the very best according to Jewish purification rituals. Jesus instructed the servants to fill each container up to the brim with water (2:7). Each stone water pot could hold about 75 to 115 litres of water, making for a grand total of 450 to 690 litres. When they had filled up the stone jars, Jesus instructed the servants to draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet (2:8). So, they did and when the head honcho tasted this stuff, he couldn’t believe it because it was the best wine that he’d ever tasted. Thinking that some sort of mistake had been made, he called the groom aside and had a little talk with him. “*Everybody I know begins with their finest wines,”* he said, *“And after the guests have had their fill brings in the cheap stuff. But you’ve saved the best till now!*” (2:10). Both quantity and quality characterized Jesus’ first sign of water to wine.

This first sign accomplished what his miraculous signs were intended to do. It revealed the glory of Jesus and inspired faith within people (2:11). Unfortunately, as the Gospel narrative unfolds, other people will not respond to his miraculous signs in the same way. In this initial episode, however, it had a good result as the disciples truly saw the sign and put their trust in Jesus. Through this sign, Jesus *revealed his glory*. The phrase “the glory of God” is a biblical term that refers to God’s transcend and eternal being which is manifested at important moments in time. For instance, God revealed his presence through his visible *glory* at pivotal moments in the history of Israel, such as the Exodus (Exodus 13:21-22; 16:10-11; 24:15-17). John’s use of this phrase in this passage indicates the presence of God in this act of Jesus. His true nature was made evident – *he is one who came from the Father, full of grace and truth* (John 1:14).

At the same time, Jesus’ act of turning the water into wine signaled that something very new was happening in the world. The waterpots of the Jewish laws of purity were replaced and superseded by the wine of Christ. A new era had begun as God’s Chosen One had arrived on the scene. This new epoch would be characterized by the high quality and great quantity of this extraordinary wine. It was bigger and better than anything that had come before. All this leads me to ask, if Jesus offers us abundant life, why do we cling to substandard stuff that only gives us temporary pleasure? Why are we satisfied with mediocrity when Jesus offers us excellence? Perhaps it’s a comfort thing; it feels a whole lot safer to stick with the familiar than to embrace something new. For those guests at the wedding, the traditional purification rituals were the tried-and-true ways of living out one’s faith in God and here comes Jesus, upsetting the applecart, with a whole bunch of new wine! What new wine does Jesus want to bring into our lives? What are the traditions, habits, routines, and rituals that need to be abandoned to make room for the new thing that Jesus desires to do among us? Like those first disciples, we want to see Jesus, behold his glory, and put our trust in him. If we embrace these moments of epiphany, we must also accept the transformation that comes with them. Are we prepared to welcome the new wine that Jesus creates among us?