

John 2:1-11

It might sound a little harsh for me to say this, but I'm glad that at the wedding at Cana the wine ran out. If it hadn't...if the person in charge of the wine had done a better job, we would not have this story in the Bible. The reason you and I even know that there was a wedding at Cana; the reason we are blessed to see how Jesus changes water into wine is because there was a problem. Not a huge problem as problems go. But for the wedding couple, their families, and their guests, running out of wine was the problem facing them right then and there.

You and I are so quick to look at the problems in our life as nothing more than problems. But problems, as this story teaches us, can be blessings. God can and does use our problems to show His power and His mercy in our lives and in the lives of others. So the question I want to put before you today is this, "Has your wine run out?" Has the love in your marriage gone dry? Are you out of patience with family members? Are you frustrated with how to cope with a sickness? Does your faith always seem to run and hide when you are confronted with temptation? I'm going to be blunt here. If you have plenty of wine; if you really don't have problems in your life that are difficult to overcome, then this sermon will not interest you. But then, neither will the Sacrament, or the words of absolution you heard earlier. Neither will the Christian Faith be of much interest to you if your wine has not run out.

Jesus would have been just another guest if the wine had not run out at Cana. But because it did run out, Jesus was called upon to save the day. Those whose wine has not run out are not typically found in church. They are not the ones hungering and thirsting for Christ in the Lord's Supper. They are not looking for assurance and hope in the words God speaks through the pastor. If there is plenty of wine; if my life is A-OK; if my sins are not a burden for me; if I do not struggle with temptation, and with guilt when I give in to it, then Jesus is the last thing on my mind. Then I'm not going to seek Jesus in His Word and His Sacraments with the cry, "I have no more wine! My wine has run out!"

Sometimes church members hate to burden their pastor with their problems. But that's why you have a pastor. It's why you have a church, and the Sacraments, and preaching, and Bible Study. If God's people did not have problems--and our own sinfulness is our biggest problem--then God's people would not need God. At least they would think they did not need Him.

Do you recall the story Jesus told of the Pharisee and the Publican in the temple? Both went in to pray. But which one really needed God? The one whose wine had run out. That wasn't the Pharisee. He had plenty of wine in his opinion. He was doing just fine. He was not a decrepit sinner. He was not burdened with guilt. He was not there to receive. No mercy, no forgiveness, no help of any kind. In his mind, he wasn't in need of a thing. His wine had not run out. But the Publican, his wine had. He had nothing left in the tank. His guilt overwhelmed him. His sins terrified him. He had no life to boast of--not before God. He deserved death--eternal death in flames. There was not one thing he could hold out to God and say, "Look at this, Lord, at least I'm trying. At least I have good intentions." No, nothing about him was good and he knew it. He was there to receive; to receive mercy, pardon, assurance, and hope. He was there because his wine had run out. If that's why you are here, then you are blessed, and you will go home justified, forgiven, and assured just as that Publican did.

"They have no more wine," Mary said to Jesus. His hour had not yet come--the hour of His crucifixion on Calvary, and yet He would help. He would give them wine now, plenty of wine to drink, and at the cross He would offer up Himself as the perfect Sacrifice so that all sinners can drink the sweet wine of life and salvation in His blood.

Jesus did not rise up and wave His hands over the water pots. He did nothing that seemed out of the ordinary. He gave a simple command, "*Fill the jars with water.*" And then, "*Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast.*" Jesus did not even take the stage. He stood behind the scene. He had the servants fill the water jars. He had the servants take the water, now become wine, to the master of the feast. He could have charged the wedding couple a hefty price for all that wine, but He didn't. He could have taken credit for His miracle, but He didn't. He was there so that when the wine ran out, working behind the scenes, He would show mercy and save the day.

For those of you whose wine has run out--and by now you should see that it has run out for all of us, although some of us refuse to admit it--Jesus is here to save the day. But as in Cana, He works behind the scenes. Jesus does not come and fill the baptismal font with water when we have a baptism. An usher, or a member of the Altar Guild fills it with water. Jesus does not put wine into the cup on the altar, and bread on the plate for Holy Communion. An Elder does these things. Jesus does not send a sermon to your pastor in the mail. Your pastor prepares the weekly sermons. The servants at Cana are working hard here in Augusta. Not of their own accord. Jesus commands His servants. Jesus says, "Baptize, teach, preach, absolve sins, give them My Holy Supper." He is the One who orders the sweet wine of salvation to be drawn out and taken to the feast so that all the guests may freely drink. But the guests at Cana did not see Jesus performing His great miracle for them, and neither do you. That is not what is the important thing here. What is important is that you be given wine--you, whose wine has run out--so that you freely drink God's grace and mercy and be assured thereby, that you will enjoy the eternal wedding feast in heaven.

So if you are here today because of a problem in your life, thanks be to God. If you are here looking for the sweet wine of God's grace because your wine has run out, thanks be to God. God's wine never runs out. Jesus died for all sinners. Jesus died for all your sins, not just some of them. God never tires of showing mercy to you. He commands His servants to fill the font and baptize until He comes again. He promises to be present with His body and blood in His Holy Supper for as often as you come to receive it. He will not ever stop forgiving you, not even when you have sinned so greatly that you don't see how He could forgive you. His sweet wine is here, right now for each and every one of you. God does forgive you. He does pardon all your offenses. He removes from you the punishment you deserve and He lays it on Jesus. As that Publican went home forgiven, so do you. What was true for the Publican; what was true for the guests at Cana, is also true for you...where Jesus is with His grace and mercy, there is always more wine for those whose wine has run out. Amen.