

John 2:1-11

If you were asked to make a list of some of the most difficult problems that you have faced in your life, running out of wine would probably not be at the top of the list. It likely wouldn't even be at the bottom. It's just not one of those crises that causes you to lose sleep at night. So we might wonder why Jesus chose this as His first miracle. It seems that it would have been more appropriate if He had healed someone who was sick, or driven out a demon, or raised a dead person to life...but no; Jesus breaks onto the scene by changing water into wine for a bunch of wedding guests at Cana.

Do you suppose that He was just "warming up?" Kind of a practice miracle before He did the really impressive stuff? And yet it was impressive enough that as a result we're told His disciples put their faith in Him. But not only that, verse 11 also tells us that this was the "chief" miracle that Jesus performed. It says "first" miracle in the English, but the Greek word here tells us that it wasn't first in line as much as it was first overall. This little miracle, as unimpressive as it might seem to be, is first and foremost; it is the chief of His miracles. It tells us who He is and why He came. It reveals Jesus to us so clearly that after leaving the wedding at Cana we, too, see His glory and put our faith in Him. And let's find out why.

They were out of wine. Someone had messed up. They had not planned correctly. It wasn't a life-or-death situation, yet it was rather embarrassing. How can you have a wedding reception without wine? Mary approaches her Son with the news, perhaps assuming that He will send out the servants for more wine. He doesn't, but He solves the problem His way—miraculously changing water into wine.

Now perhaps some may think that Jesus was a little over the top here. Why use your Divine powers to fix a problem as small as that? It's not like Jesus was doing this so that everyone in the crowd would take notice and fall down to worship Him. Hardly anyone even knew that He did it. The servants knew because they were the ones who filled the pots with water. But the headwaiter did not know. He enjoyed the good-tasting wine and yet no announcement was made to the guests proclaiming that Jesus of Nazareth had just performed a miracle. This little miracle was quietly done behind the scenes. The servants knew; the disciples knew; and you and I know. And perhaps we can take comfort in the fact that this miracle tells us that even little problems are important to our Lord. When you and I run out of wine—when little things make life difficult, Jesus cares and He is able to help.

But as comforting as that may be, there is something else going on here at Cana. Let's look closer at the words of the headwaiter: "Everyone brings out the choice wine first." And he's right—and that truth is the key to understanding this miracle. Even though Jesus obeyed His mother; even though He saved the day by providing wine for the wedding guests, that was not His primary objective. Jesus had something else in mind, and the headwaiter's words tell us what that is—"Everyone brings out the choice wine first"—and that is exactly what Jesus was doing. He was bringing out the choice wine first.

His time had come. It was time to begin the wedding feast. When Jesus changed the water into wine, He wasn't saving the best wine for last; He was bringing out the best wine first because the wedding feast was just beginning. Jesus the Divine Bridegroom had come to

claim His Bride, and here at Cana He begins that wedding feast by changing water into the choicest of all wines.

At Cana the words of the prophet Isaiah are fulfilled: “No longer will they call you ‘Deserted,’ or name your land ‘Desolate;’ but you will be called ‘My delight is in her,’ and your land, ‘Married;’ for the Lord will take delight in you...as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you.” (Isaiah 62)

Jesus’ disciples put their faith in Him, not because He “wowed” them by turning water into wine, but because with this miracle, He was showing them that He, their God, rejoiced over them as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride. And that is also what it means for you. His miracle at Cana may tell you that He cares about your little problems in life, but even more, it proclaims to you that He is your Divine Bridegroom and He rejoices over you, His Bride.

And we would be absolutely correct if we wondered, “Why?” It’s not like we are the cream of the crop. We are not some fair maiden who has caused our God to take note of our loveliness and goodness. We are, as Isaiah writes, “Desolate,” and “Deserted.” Not the fairest of the fair, but the ugliest of the ugly. Our deeds are wicked. Our hearts are full of unbelief and our lives show it. Our mouths speak words of rebellion. Our minds think that which is evil.

Picture a bride walking up the aisle, her teeth yellow and black, her hair full of dirt and oil, her odor repulsive, and her garments ratty and full of holes. What bridegroom would stand up here beaming with pride as she took each step toward him? More likely he would, quick as lightning, run out the door.

But that’s not what your God does with you. Because even though that is exactly how we look, for we are full of sin’s ugliness, your Divine Bridegroom rejoices over you. And that’s not because He closes His eyes and holds His nose. Rather, He washes you clean of your sin in Holy Baptism. He dresses you with His holy innocence. And Jesus’ miracle at Cana sets it all in motion.

Cana points us to the cross. That is the high point of the wedding feast. It is where the Bridegroom says, “I do,” to His Bride. At Calvary Jesus’ time had come. The time for Him to die for His sinful Bride. He dies there for you, not in spite of your sin and rebellion, but because of it. He doesn’t love you only when times are good; He loves you “for better and for worse.” And so even though you and I live for ourselves and reject His claim on us, His love does not waver. Even though we are an unfaithful Bride, He bears our burden and He forgives you of all your wrongdoing.

Even though we were not at Cana, we are a part of Cana’s feast. Your baptism includes you in the wedding festivities. The new wine that Jesus made at Cana comes to you at the font. You are not part of the Old Covenant; you, through Holy Baptism, are included in the New Covenant of Jesus’ blood. In baptism Jesus makes you His beautiful Bride. In baptism He gives you a new name—no longer “Desolate,” and “Deserted,” but “Married,” and “My delight is in her.”

You are the Bride of Christ. The wedding feast began at Cana when Jesus brought out the choice wine. It climaxed at Calvary where He died for you. And in your baptism He made you holy and radiant covering you, His Bride, with His holy innocence.

At Cana the headwaiter said that the best wine is served first and then the cheaper wine is brought out. But for you there is no cheaper wine. Christ never serves poor wine to His Bride. He only gives you the best of His gifts. His mercy and grace will never run out. He will never grow tired of you. His love will never fail. “As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup” you proclaim that you are one for whom Christ died.

He did not die for a beautiful Bride—He died for a sinner. He made you His beautiful Bride in baptism, and with His body and blood for you He remains faithful to you even unto death. There will never be a time in your life when He will stop forgiving you. Even though we daily sin against Him, He faithfully gives Himself for you in His Word and Sacraments. He forgives you because you are His Bride.

And having a Divine Bridegroom like Him, why would we want to disobey Him? Why would we want to be unfaithful to our vows to Him? He is the perfect Husband to us. His love is unselfish. His mercy is unending. His blessings are what we need.

You and I don't have to wonder how that wine at Cana tasted. We know how it tastes because we drink of it every day. Every day Jesus is with you. Every day Jesus cares for you. Every day He forgives you. As long as you live you will enjoy Cana's wedding feast—the feast that began with His new wine; the feast of His love for you at Calvary's cross; the feast which you are a part of because you are baptized into Christ.

And friend, when the feast here is over, it continues on in heaven. For that home above—your Heavenly Bridegroom's home—is where He, one day, will take you, carrying you as His new Bride across the threshold of eternity.

And so today, enjoy the feast—here in the presence of His Word; here at the font and at His altar—the wedding feast is for you, for Christ is yours and you are His. Amen.