

## ***“See the Sign and Believe”***

Since it is the Season of Epiphany, we should be asking ourselves – what is the Epiphany here in our text – what is God manifesting to us? Well, that’s easy, for St. John writes in verse 11 – “This, the first of His signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and MANIFESTED (epiphany-ed) His glory. And His disciples believed in Him.”

This “first of His signs” is not just the first one chronologically – but it is literally His arch-sign – the chief one, the one that takes priority, the one that stands above all the others. It is not only a miracle that shows us that Jesus is true God – but it is a sign begging to be fulfilled – a sign that points us forward to the fullness of His glory – a glory that is connected to the cross.

And why does God reveal His glory? So that His disciples might believe in Him. Or, as St. John writes at the end of his Gospel – “Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.” (20:30-31)

It’s important for us to understand that St. John the Evangelist is not just some kind of cub-reporter whose job it is to write down all the facts and observation he sees. John is “inspired” by the Holy Spirit to write in a certain way – to write certain words by which the Lord is revealing to us that which is need for faith – which is to say, for eternal life.

For instance, St. John has been counting the days in his Gospel – not for the sake of chronology, but theology. So when he writes that “on the third day” there was a wedding at Cana – if you’ve been counting in John’s Gospel – you would know that this is the sixth day.

Now, do you remember how John (or, should I say, the Holy Spirit) begins this Gospel? St. John writes – “In the beginning was the Word ...” He’s calling the Creation to mind for you – and now, here in our text, the sixth day of creation. On that day – on this day – God made them male and female – and brought the woman He had created to the man.

And then we hear, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.” This is God’s institution of Holy Marriage.

So, what does this have to do with a wedding at Cana? As we have already heard, this is all about faith in Jesus who is the greater-Bridegroom (greater than the bridegroom here in our text). Jesus is the One who provides what is “good” for His Bride, the Church (that’s you, and all believers).

So here we are at the wedding with the mother of Jesus, and Jesus, and His disciples. The mother of Jesus says to Him – “They have no wine.” This is a problem – not only theologically, but practically.

It would have been typical for a wedding to have a master of the feast – who would be in charge of regulating the wine so that everyone reaches (and stays) at a certain level of joy. Now they have run short – not just of wine – but a lack of joy. This is not just a social blunder, but more importantly, the Bride of Christ is lacking, falling short.

“Woman,” Jesus says, literally, “what to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.” This seemingly awkward statement shows both a relationship – and tension – between Jesus and this “woman.”

There are two different mindsets. “You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.” The woman is concerned about the wedding and the guest – and Jesus is focused on His glory.

To address His mother as “woman” sounds rude and disrespectful – but again, the Holy Spirit is the one writing, and with these words, is making connections and giving us epiphanies. The mother of Jesus is never referred to by her name “Mary” in St. John’s Gospel. She is “the mother of Jesus” – who does not show up again in this Gospel until 19:26, where, at the cross, Jesus says to His mother – “Woman, behold, your son!”

When Jesus calls her “woman” at the wedding, a connection is being made with His crucifixion – where, in John’s Gospel, the glory of God finds its fulfillment. His, “It is finished” death – fills to the brim all that the Bride is lacking.

“My hour has not yet come” isn’t referring to His first miracle – rather – it’s not yet time to reveal my glory in crucifixion – in sacrificing myself for my Bride.

Did you notice that Mary was not offended? Rather, she lives by faith. She instructs the servants – and us – “Do whatever He tells you.” Jesus says “fill” and “they filled.” Jesus says “take” and “they took.” Just as it was “in the beginning” – when “God said” and “it was so.”

Six stone jars for purification filled to the brim. FULL – FILLED. This is why Jesus has come, why the Word became flesh and dwelt among us – to fulfill all of the Old Testament – to fulfill His Father’s will – to do what we have “fallen short” in doing.

All of this points us to the “it is finished” sacrifice of Jesus on the cross which purifies us from all our sin. God the Holy Spirit is sanctifying us by these words – so that we may believe – and in believing, have life in Jesus’ name. Sanctified – so that we might dwell in the presence of the Holy One.

In the Old Testament it is revealed that when Messiah comes – the wine will be so plentiful that Jacob would wash his clothes in wine. Amos says that the mountains would drip with sweet wine, flooding the hills and the earth, when Messiah comes.

And now Jesus, the Christ, the greater-Bridegroom has come – and gives us the “good” wine. This is the language of Genesis again. It’s “not good” that the man should be alone – so God creates the woman, brings her to the man, and marries them. And God saw this – and everything else He has created – and declared it to be “very good.”

This is the glory that God is manifesting to you today. You know all too well how you (and all of creation) has fallen short of the glory of God. Like Adam and Eve, your sin has brought shame. With the psalmist you cry out – “I lift up mine eyes to the hills, where does my help come from?” And with the mother of Jesus – you know where your help comes from – the Lord Jesus, maker of heaven and earth.

God’s glory is manifested to you in His Son Jesus – who redeems you, reconciles you, re-creates you. He takes your “not good” – and with His blood, makes you to be “very good” in the Father’s eyes.

This He does “in the presence of His disciples.” He gathers you, His Bride, to His Table – and you kneel in humility – not offended, but in faith. A faith that hears the command to “do whatever He tells you” – and you do it.

You eat and drink His Body and Blood for your “good.” You remember all that He has done for you by His sacrifice on Calvary. Even as He fills you to the brim with His “good” wine that purifies you from all iniquity.

Dearly beloved, Jesus has manifested His glory to you – so that you may see God’s love for you – and believing in Jesus, the Christ – there is great joy, for you have life in His name. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.