

## Sermon for January 19, 2025 – The 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Epiphany

John 2:1-11 EHV

Theme: *In Vino Jesu Veritates - In Jesus' Wine are Truths*

1. A truth about asking Jesus.
2. A truth about faith.
3. A truth about Jesus' compassion.
4. A truth about hidden miracles.

*Three days later, there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee. Jesus' mother was there. <sup>2</sup>Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the wedding. <sup>3</sup>When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no wine." <sup>4</sup>Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does that have to do with you and me? My time has not come yet." <sup>5</sup>His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." <sup>6</sup>Six stone water jars, which the Jews used for ceremonial cleansing, were standing there, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. <sup>7</sup>Jesus told them, "Fill the jars with water." So they filled them to the brim. <sup>8</sup>Then he said to them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." And they did. <sup>9</sup>When the master of the banquet tasted the water that had now become wine, he did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew). The master of the banquet called the bridegroom <sup>10</sup>and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and when the guests have had plenty to drink, then the cheaper wine. You saved the good wine until now!" <sup>11</sup>This, the beginning of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed in Cana of Galilee. He revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him.*

*In vino veritas* is a Latin saying meaning "in wine is truth." It expresses the idea that if you give a person enough wine, they may reveal information that they wouldn't disclose otherwise.

Today, however, I am using this phrase in a different context. Jesus' first recorded miracle, the transformation of water into wine, unveils significant truths about our relationship with Him. Let us explore these truths under the theme: ***In Vino Jesu Veritates - In Jesus' Wine are Truths:*** 1) A truth about asking Jesus. 2) A truth about faith. 3) A truth about Jesus' compassion. 4) A truth about hidden miracles.

Part One: A Truth About Asking Jesus.

Our sermon text takes place at the beginning of Jesus' ministry - shortly after His baptism and temptation in the wilderness. We read:

*Three days later (after Jesus called Phillip and Nathanael into discipleship), there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee. Jesus' mother was there. <sup>2</sup>Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the wedding.*

We should note that, due to the distances people had to travel, ancient Jewish weddings were not just one-day events; they were typically week-long affairs. This context helps us understand what happened next.

<sup>3</sup>*When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no wine."*

Why did Jesus' mother mention this to Him? While she was undoubtedly concerned for the bridal couple, she also wanted Jesus to seize the opportunity to reveal His true identity to the world. For 30 years, Jesus had kept His divine nature a secret, but things were changing. God the Father had just anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit at His baptism—declaring Him to be His Son. Jesus started gathering disciples. The stage was all set, so why shouldn't Jesus reveal His true nature now, in front of His family and friends?

These thoughts, combined with the bridal couple's dilemma, prompted Mary to raise the issue of the wine shortage with Jesus.

This brings us to the first truth we should consider this morning: the truth about asking Jesus for help. Mary did not let doubts about whether Jesus "could" or "would" answer her request stop her from making it. She also did not demand specifics about how He should respond. Mary presented the problem and left it to Him to decide the best course of action. She did this in faith—fully convinced of Jesus' identity and compassion.

When we bring our requests to Him in prayer, Jesus doesn't want us to doubt whether He can or will help us. Instead, He wants us to trust that He is who the Bible says He is, trusting in His promised mercy to help. He invites us to ask for anything<sup>1</sup>: from big things, like rescue from disaster, to little things, like being saved from the embarrassment of not having enough wine at a party. More importantly, however, Jesus wants us to remember His true purpose is not to make our earthly lives easier, but to be our Saviour from sin and reconcile us to God.

## Part Two: A Truth About Faith

That is probably why Jesus responded to Mary by saying, "*Woman, what does that have to do with you and me?*"

Did Jesus disrespect His mother by calling her "woman"? No, He didn't. Since Mary believed Jesus was the Messiah, He spoke to her as such—reminding her of His true purpose, which was not to rescue people from embarrassment but to save them from their sins. If he were to perform a public miracle in the way Mary hoped, the people would have worshipped him merely as a Messiah who provides them with food and wine, but not as their divine Saviour from sin.

Therefore, Jesus added: *My time has not come yet*. It's interesting to note that whenever Jesus talks about his "coming time" throughout the Gospels, He seems to be speaking of the glory that would come to Him through His crucifixion. Now was not the time for a miracle intended to draw attention to Himself; that revelation would come later when He hung on the cross to save us from our sins.

Mary accepted Jesus' response, trusting that even though His hour had not come to publicly glorify himself, He would still mercifully answer her request in some way.

Therefore, <sup>5</sup>*His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."*

This brings us to the second truth we should consider: what kind of faith does Jesus want us to have when we ask him for things in prayer? First, He wants us to remember that His purpose is not merely to make our earthly lives trouble-free. The whole reason we have trouble on this earth is because our sins have separated us from God. His purpose is to reconcile us to God by forgiving our sins so that we can have everlasting life with Him in paradise.

Keeping this in mind, Jesus also wants us to trust that He will keep His promise to graciously answer our prayers – even when it seems He might not. Such faith led Mary to instruct the servants to do whatever Jesus told them. Where did she get such faith? God worked it in her heart through His Old Testament promises.

Jesus wants us to have that same kind of faith. He said on another occasion: *I tell you, everything that you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.*<sup>ii</sup>

This does not mean that if you ask for a Ferrari, God will give you a Ferrari. To such a selfish request, Jesus says: *"What does that have to do with you and me?"* Instead, it means that every prayer we make, trusting in His promised mercy, He will answer for our benefit and to His glory. The form His answer takes might not be exactly how we imagine, nevertheless, His response will ultimately be for our good.

### Part Three: A Truth about Jesus' Compassion

<sup>6</sup>*Six stone water jars, which the Jews used for ceremonial cleansing, were standing there, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. <sup>7</sup>Jesus told them, "Fill the jars with water." So they filled them to the brim.*

The act of filling those 20-30 gallon jars with water was nothing special. Water was routinely used for ceremonial washings, so the servants probably thought Jesus was preparing for some kind of purification rite. But...

<sup>8</sup>*Then he said to them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." And they did.*

While obeying Jesus' command, I can imagine the servants wondering: "What is Jesus doing?"

What Jesus was doing was expressing compassion! In a world of problems, running out of wine at a party does not seem like it would occupy the top of God's list of concerns. Yet, Jesus compassionately responded to Mary's request and showed mercy to the unaware bridal couple.

The truth we learn here is that Jesus' compassion extends even to the little issues in life. As Lutherans, we rightly emphasize Jesus' greatest act of compassion: His death on the cross for our sins. Why? Because our need for His forgiveness is so great. Nevertheless, we should never believe anything is too insignificant to take to Him in prayer, nor imagine that He is too busy to care about the little things in our lives. The Bible says: <sup>32</sup>*Indeed, he who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also graciously give us all things along with him?*<sup>iii</sup>

Jesus wants us to trust His compassion and involvement in every aspect of our lives. Yes, even though our lives are filled with problems big and small, Jesus, our Saviour, guides us through them all, keeping His promise *that in all things God works for the good of those who love him.*<sup>iv</sup>

#### Part Four: A Truth About Hidden Miracles

<sup>9</sup>*When the master of the banquet tasted the water that had now become wine, he did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew). The master of the banquet called the bridegroom <sup>10</sup>and said to him, “Everyone serves the good wine first, and when the guests have had plenty to drink, then the cheaper wine. You saved the good wine until now!”*

<sup>11</sup>*This, the beginning of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed in Cana of Galilee. He revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him.*

A great miracle had taken place that should have made headline news, but only a handful of people perceived it: Jesus' mother, the servants who obeyed Jesus' command, and the six disciples who were present. Their faith was strengthened by Jesus' miracle. To the rest, however, Jesus' identity and compassion remained a mystery. Even the bridal pair had no clue what happened.

That brings us to the final truth we will consider this morning: the truth about hidden miracles. Believers in Christ have a fundamentally different worldview than the rest of humanity. For example, unbelievers see the food they eat as a result of their labour, while believers rejoice in it as a gift from God's love. Unbelievers may view recovery from an illness as a product of healthy living or science, but believers praise God for His undeserved healing.

Hidden miracles of God's protection and providence impact us every day. Those who have struggled financially might recall moments when, just when things seemed darkest, an unexpected rebate check or tax break appeared at precisely the right time. Others may remember how, when they needed it most, someone unknowingly told them the precise encouragement they needed to hear. The greatest of all God's hidden miracles is the forgiveness that Jesus won for us on the cross. He has paid for the sins of every person on earth—whether they recognize it or not. Sadly, because unbelievers reject what God promises in His Word, they miss what He freely offers everyone through faith in the Gospel: the forgiveness of sins.

Praise God, therefore, that the Holy Spirit has opened your eyes to see the miraculous compassion God has for you in Christ. Through His Gospel in Word and Sacrament, God has awakened faith in your hearts to understand who Jesus is and why he came. Through faith in Him, we no longer view things from a worldly perspective but recognize that God is active everywhere, working in all circumstances for the benefit of those who love Him.

May the truths we learned today about who Jesus is and the compassion He expresses through His hidden miracles encourage us to hold onto Him more tightly in faith. Let us boldly seek His compassion and help in every aspect of our lives. May these truths also inspire us to share the good news about Jesus with others, so that the Holy Spirit might open their eyes to the miracle of God's saving love for them in Christ. Amen.

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<sup>i</sup> Cf. John 14:13,14 & 1 John 5:14-15

<sup>ii</sup> Mark 11:24 EHV

<sup>iii</sup> Romans 8:32 EHV

<sup>iv</sup> Romans 8:28 NIV84