

2nd Sunday after Epiphany, 2006

Text: John 2:1-11

Trinity Lutheran, Worden, IL & Zion Lutheran, Carpenter, IL

Pastor H. R. Curtis

XGrace and Peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord
and Savior, Jesus Christ X

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy
Spirit. Amen.

In the world things go from bad to worse. In the far away past there might have been the good old days – but those days are long gone. Things are harder now. Things wear out. We expect this and so we try to gobble up as much good as we think we can get, right now and quickly. We lie to each other by bringing out the good wine first only to serve the rot-gut boxed stuff later on. So men dress to the nines and act on their best behavior for the job interview, but after they are hired they show up late, speak ill of their employer and try to get away with as little work as possible. So many a newly married couple is surprised to find that the good wine they served each other in courtship has run out as they now fill the other's cup with the sour wine of harsh words, daydreams of a different life, and a marriage taken for granted.

Yes, in the world, the good wine soon runs dry and some lesser substitute has to be found. This is why the people you fight with the most and are most cruel to are your own family members – you see them too much to lie to them all the time; you've run out of good wine and first impressions and so have to be yourself and draw from a truer source. Such are the ways of all men – and who can escape it?

But the Lord's ways are higher than your ways – his thoughts are not your thoughts. So repent. Turn away from the mad grabbing and lying of the world, turn away from your own dark heart and look on this Jesus. For he has saved the good wine until now. He is gracious and always has another, better gift to give. His Mother has faith in this goodness even when he seems to speak to her so harshly, "What's that to you and me, woman?" Even when all seems to have gone wrong, even when the ways of men have seen to it that there shall be no more good wine she looks to him for good things. She is the very picture of Christian faith:

Do whatever he says is her advice. It may seem like madness – but do whatever he says, for it only seems like madness because your thoughts are lower than his thoughts.

And what an odd thing he says to do: they have no wine, so fill up the cleansing jars with water? Odd indeed – but take heed, Christian, for this was done that you might understand the ways of God. For these six jars for washing are there for the sake of the Old Covenant, the Old Testament. God commanded that his people wash before eating so here are these six jars. These six jars call to mind the whole Old Covenant with its Passover feast of lamb's flesh and blood, its bloody sacrifices at the temple, its once a year day of atonement when the high priest tried to propitiate God with an animal's blood for his own sins and the sins of the people.

If God were like you that Old Covenant would have been the best he had to offer, for he would have poured out the good wine first. But God's ways are not your ways, his thoughts are far above yours. All that Old Covenant was merely a shadow of what was to come – oh, it was good, make no mistake about it. But it was good not in itself but for what it pointed toward. For Jesus takes the Old and fills it to bursting with the New.

Yes, fill those Old Testament water jars and fill them to brim, for Jesus has come to fulfill all that was written in Moses and the Prophets, for the whole of that Old Covenant is nothing except a sign pointing to Jesus. Yes, fill those jars in which you had been always cleansing and yet never cleansed. Fill them up with water, which while it may quench the thirst can never gladden the hearts of men. Fill it up – and then draw out and find all things changed.

For when Jesus fulfills the Old, all things have been made new. Not water you will find, but the finest wine. Not a Passover of blood on the doorpost and a lamb on the roasting spit – but a never ending feast of salvation in the blood of the very Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, who gives his flesh for true food that you might have eternal life. When Jesus fills up the Old it's no longer a sacrifice of atonement made with sinful human hands that must be repeated year after year, for now the Human who is God has made the only real sacrifice that ever there was or will be as he, sent by the Father's love, sacrifices himself in the place of sinners – in the place of you – once and for all. When Jesus fills up the Old with the New, the Old cannot contain it – so the earth shakes and the sun

darkens and most wonderfully of all, the temple curtain is torn asunder. For that old temple of stone and cedar was but a shadow of the true Temple of the body of our Lord Jesus Christ – which though torn down was raised on the third day.

All this is the hour of Lord. All this is why he came. He came for you – to lay down his life for you and take it up again for your salvation. He came to be sin for you and suffer God's wrath against it because God the Father loves you and so sent his Son to the cross. This is his hour: Good Friday's cross, Holy Saturday's Sabbath rest in the tomb and Easter Sunday's resurrection triumph.

But here in the Gospel lesson, at this wedding in Cana, his hour is not yet come. So he gives a sign of what he will do: the Old will be filled with the New, God's best is yet to come. For our Lord Jesus Christ is so very gracious and merciful that he even hears our smallest requests. Though it was not Jesus' hour, the plight of the bride and groom who ran out of wine was not beneath him. Jesus did not walk about brooding over the cross that lay ahead of him, heedless to the suffering he saw around him. For the two are connected. The petty hardships of life and the great, dark sinfulness that would threaten our eternity are cut from the same cloth. Jesus came to see to it that every tear was wiped away, that all hearts were gladdened, that every imperfection and annoyance should be taken away from us and cleansed out of us.

So though his hour had not yet come he proclaims his glory and prophesies his coming hour with this miracle. This miracle is another shadow, another foretaste, another bit of salvation cut from the same cloth as Good Friday and Easter Sunday. So it is with every prayer of yours that the Lord longs to hear and grant. He is so gracious that there is nothing too petty for him. Like the great Father he is, he delights when his children bring to him even their smallest desires. If you fathers, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your little children when they ask, will your Father in heaven not all the more delight to hear you? For it is a father's glory to care for his children in the little ways as well as the big, for the little ways point toward the big.

And so on his way to the cross our Lord did not hesitate to go to a wedding feast and celebrate. He did not turn down the invitation because he was too busy getting ready to save the world. He is never too busy to gladden the hearts of men and

rejoice with them. For the Son of Man came eating and drinking. He came that you might have life and have it to the fullest. He takes delight in your marriage and in your everyday work. He wants to hear your prayers about the everyday annoyances and griefs you bear. These are the little gifts that come right along with the big gift. For even the little gifts proclaim his glory. So while in this world you will have trouble, look to him for good things – including the gift of bearing crosses that may not pass from you. For he has not promised you easy earthly success, but triumph through hardship, mercy in the midst of misery. Imitate Mary and this bride and groom at the feast and expect good things from him and trust his mercy even when things go wrong.

For how can he who gave himself for you on the cross not also want all good things for you? The real trouble is that we don't always know what is truly good. That is why Mary's faith in this text is such a fine example to you. She does not say, "Jesus, send out one of these disciples of yours to buy some more wine." She does not come to Jesus with her own plan – she only comes with a simple statement of need: "They have no wine." And then, even when it seems the Lord has rebuked her for calling upon him when it is not his hour, she says simply, "Do whatever he tells you." She trusts that though it is not his hour, still he will be merciful. She does not know how. She does not know what to expect. He has done no signs before this – for John says this is his first – so she can't see this coming. But she knows her Lord, her Savior, her Son. So she knows that whatever he says will be worth doing for it will be mercy.

And so do whatever he says. And this is what he says to you today: Take, eat for this is my Body. Take drink for this is my blood. Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. For the Lord always has more gifts to give. Once he had six water jars filled and made it real wine, now for you he fills a chalice with wine and makes it real blood, his blood, the blood of the New Covenant. Surely this is the greatest Wedding Feast – the Supper of our Lord's Precious Body and Precious Blood. Surely now your cup overflows with the New Wine of heaven – the very blood that bought your salvation. Who shall not hunger and thirst for such a gift? Who will not desire it as often as possible? For what the water of the Old Covenant couldn't do, what the wine at Cana signified, has now been done to you with this miraculous Blood, this liquid grace, in the Sacrament of the Altar: you are clean, you are whole, you are forgiven and beloved by God, for thus is his eternal life put in you. Amen.

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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Now the peace of God which passes all understanding will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

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