

2nd Sunday after Epiphany
January 19, 2025
Lincoln Heights Lutheran Church
God Delivers More Than We Ask

John 2:1-11 (EHV)

Three days later, there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee. Jesus' mother was there. ²Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the wedding. ³When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no wine." ⁴Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does that have to do with you and me? My time has not come yet." ⁵His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

⁶Six stone water jars, which the Jews used for ceremonial cleansing, were standing there, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. ⁷Jesus told them, "Fill the jars with water." So they filled them to the brim. ⁸Then he said to them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." And they did. ⁹When 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 ¹⁰and 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!"

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

Dear Friends in Christ,

Can you imagine how embarrassing it would be to run out of wine at a wedding reception? It is time for the toasts and the servers are filling fancy glasses with water because that is all that is left. What would the guests think? What are your friends going to say about you later? How embarrassing! At the time of Christ, a Jewish wedding celebration was more than a one-day event. It often lasted a week. Family and friends expected to be fed well and have plenty to drink the entire week. Even more embarrassing to run out of wine in that situation.

But as embarrassing as it would have been, that is all it would have been. It is only embarrassment. No one actually dies of embarrassment. It was a simple social blunder that years later this couple could have looked back on with laughter. "Remember when we ran out of wine at the wedding feast?" It was really not a big deal. But Mary brings the situation to the attention of Jesus, and he does more than she asked. Jesus uses the occasion of a wedding, a very common occurrence in about every culture in the world, to perform his first public miracle. He does much more than help this couple avoid an embarrassing social blunder. Jesus gives them much more than they asked for and displayed his glory as the true Son of God to strengthen the faith of his disciples. Still today, Jesus gives us more than we ask.

Three days later, there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee. Jesus' mother was there. ²Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the wedding. ³When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no wine." ⁴Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does that have to do with you and me? My time has not come yet." ⁵His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

Mary doesn't directly ask Jesus to do anything. She simply presents the problem. "They have no more wine." Mary knows that Jesus, her Son and the Son of God, can do anything. But we are not told what she expected Jesus to do. Certainly, she expects Jesus to help, perhaps even to provide some amount of wine to save the celebration. He will do much more than that. However, he first makes it clear that he, the Son of God, decides when and how to help.

"Woman, what does that have to do with you and me?" This is not a stinging rebuke of his mother, but it does remind her that Christ's primary work is not to deliver people out of socially embarrassing moments. "My time has not come yet" reminds her that the time for Jesus to rescue sinners from the wrath and eternal punishment of God had not yet come. The cross would be

before him in three short years. There was much to do in those years, and he would not leave one thing undone that was necessary for our eternal salvation.

Jesus could not have to do a miracle. He would refuse to do miracles in the future. Remember when he was sent to Herod by Pilate. Herod wanted to see Jesus perform miracles. What great entertainment that would have been for the king and his friends. But Jesus refused. Miracles before Herod did not accomplish God's purposes so Jesus did not do any miraculous signs then. But here, at a simple, common, wedding feast, Jesus chooses to perform the first of his miraculous signs.

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What a miracle it was! Jesus did not just fill their glasses with wine. He turned between 120 and 180 gallons of water into wine. And it was good wine, not the cheap stuff. The bridegroom had no idea what happened and he gets the credit for saving the good wine until now. No embarrassment for him. And I very much doubt that the wedding celebration used up so much wine. Well over 100 gallons of wine is a very generous wedding gift. Perhaps it could have been sold to help the newlyweds begin life together. Very little was asked and Jesus decided to give generously.

What are you asking God for? Maybe you are doing what Mary did and simply presenting problems before the Lord. Mary gives us a great example here. For sometimes we give God all the details, not only of the problem, which is fine, but also of the solution we expect. "Jesus, my loved one is sick, and this is how and when I want you to heal them." "God, I'm having trouble with this at school or that at work, and I've got a great plan for you to follow to make everything better."

When we fall into this kind of asking God for help, we are acting like God is not wise enough to figure out the best way to address the issue. We are at least a little, telling God that we don't trust that what he comes up with will work. And when God does not follow our instructions, we might get upset with him or begin to think he doesn't care. Mary's way is better and showed her faith in her Son who was also her Savior. Here is the problem. I trust you to do what is best.

How do we then turn from trusting our plans and trust in God's plans? Repent of our pride in thinking we have any wisdom to share with the Lord. Repent of our mistrust in thinking that God might not do what is best for us. And when we have come before the Lord God in humble repentance, look at the Epiphany moment before us today.

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The big thing that everyone at the wedding feast experienced was a sudden appearance of lots of great wine. But most did not know how it had appeared. Jesus did this great miracle not only to make the celebration joyous, but more importantly to display his glory before his disciples. Jesus had been calling the disciples to follow him. It is not clear how many of the disciples were with him at this time. John tells us in the previous chapter about the calling of Andrew, Peter, Phillip and Nathanael. We can probably assume James and his brother John were along too since John writes about this miracle. Even if all twelve are with him at the wedding, he did this to strengthen the faith of a small group of believers.

They already believed that he was the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, as John the Baptist had told some of them. The miracle is a sign, something that points them to the truth that Jesus is the Son of God. The miraculous sign does not create faith but confirms their faith in Jesus as the one and only Savior of the world. Jesus wanted his disciples to believe in him so that they receive the blessings he will deliver through his death and resurrection. For at the cross, he will pay for all the sins of pride and mistrust and every other sin. By his resurrection God will declare the whole world not guilty. And by faith, a sinner receives this forgiveness and declaration and is saved eternally. This is what Jesus wanted for his disciples, and he wants the same for you.

When we look at a problem in life, we only see a small blip on the timeline of our lives and an even smaller blip on the timeline of the world. Jesus, the true Son of God see all of time, from eternity past to eternity future. Place your problems before him and trust that he will answer in the best way to get you to his goal for you, eternal life. He might deliver you from some evil immediately. When we see his glory revealed in this way, we praise him before others.

On the other hand, we might have to wait patiently as the Lord develops our Christian character and perseverance to face all the challenges the devil and the world will throw at us. As we wait, we praise his name because he is the glorious Son of God who suffered to save us. Nothing we suffered is more than he suffered. Nothing we suffer can take us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

So, bring your requests to the Lord Jesus. No request is too insignificant for him. No person is too insignificant. He took time at a wedding feast of unnamed people to help them with a wedding gift they didn't even ask for. He has time for you. At the same time, remember Christ's goal for you is to keep you in faith until the end so that you receive all that he has earned. He can accomplish this because he is the Son of God who turned water into wine and also rose from the dead. He does more than we can ask or imagine.

Amen.