

Second Sunday after Epiphany
Year C

Isaiah 62:1-5

Psalm 36:5-10

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

John 2:1-11

What could possibly go wrong at a wedding? Perhaps someone stepped on the train of the bride's dress and tore it. Or the minister forgot the groom's name. Or the ring-bearer lost the rings. One of the greatest fears is someone standing up and objecting to the marriage, being the legal spouse of one of the parties. The reception has even more opportunities for failure. Hollywood has made such failures standard fare in movies and TV programs. With all of these possibilities, is it any wonder that Jesus' first miracle involves a wedding?

In the reading from the Gospel according to John, we see Jesus, His mother, and the disciples at a wedding feast in Cana of Galilee. During the reception, a crisis arises - they are out of wine. When the mother of Jesus hears the news, she turns to Jesus for a solution. Two things then happen - Jesus says it is not His problem and then He solves the problem with an abundance of wine. What is going on here?

The first thing to notice is the apparent realization on the part of both Jesus and His mother that Jesus has the ability to solve the problem. One can only imagine that Mary has been harboring the memories of all that occurred surrounding the birth of Jesus all these years. She remembers the visitation of the angel, the trip to Bethlehem and then on to Egypt before settling down in Nazareth. Then there were the prophecies of Simeon and Anna at the Temple and that crazy incident in the Temple when Jesus was 12. How could any mother not realize that there was something special about this child?

Jesus also knew He had a special calling on His life. As far back as when He was 12, Jesus knew God had work for Him to do. Then, at His baptism by John, Jesus saw the heavens open and heard the voice speak to Him. Yes, Jesus knew who His Father was. Why the reluctance then at the wedding? Jesus felt the time was not yet for Him to truly do the work He knew was before Him.

Why, then, did He act? Was it because His mother had prodded Him into action? Was it because Jesus felt sorry for the groom? Or, did Jesus realize that this was how God desired to show that Jesus' time had come? Perhaps the disciples needed to see something to convince them that Jesus was God's Son.

While we may not know the motivations behind Jesus' action, we can learn from this story. First, Jesus was not being rude to His mother when He refused to act. He was creating some distance from His family and showing that He must be guided by His interpretation of what God was calling Him to do. No one can direct us in our calling, not even our parents. Like Jesus, all of us must focus on what God is asking each of us to do as we respond to God. Mary may acknowledge that fact, even as she tells the servants to do whatever Jesus tells them to do.

We also see Jesus being influenced by His mother. Even though He states His time has not yet arrived, He goes ahead and acts. Can we influence God through our prayers even as Mary has influenced Jesus? Does human need stir the heart of God - even something as minor as running out of wine at a party? This reading implies that.

We see at the end of the reading a possible reason for the action - that the disciples believed in Him. Throughout John's Gospel, we see signs, or miracles, point beyond the simple action to what is revealed through them. In this case, it is the opening of the eyes of the disciples to the reality of Jesus.

Like the chief steward, we may not recognize the source or meaning of all that God does. We may not see the signs as being evidence of God's love for us. The chief steward did recognize that this wine was superior to what had been served to the crowd, he recognized quality even when not knowing its source. We also can recognize quality when we see it. As the old saying goes, God does not give us junk - only the good stuff. God gives us the best and gives it to us abundantly.

Perhaps like Mary, we might be able to influence God. Perhaps like the disciples, we need to see something out of the ordinary to open our eyes to God's will. Perhaps like Jesus, we need to sort out what God wants us to do from what family and friends might be telling us. But in all of this, we need to see God working in and through us to the greater good of God's Kingdom.