



Liturgical Day: The Second Sunday after the Epiphany

Date: January 14, 2007

Sermon Title: And His Disciples Believed

Grace to you and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Weddings are remarkable experiences, aren't they? They are all so different. I've presided at weddings where the guests showed up in tuxedos and formal gowns. There have been other weddings where most of those in attendance were decked out in cowboy boots and hats. I've participated in weddings that were accompanied by string ensembles and classical music. Of other weddings, folk music prevailed. At some weddings there are so many guests that we have to set up extra chairs. Yet one wedding found us searching the facility to see if we could come up with someone to serve as a second witness for the license.

Despite all their differences, most weddings are (at least for the wedding Party) memorable occasions. I'd guess that every married person here today could tell us what was memorable about the day they were married. Betsy and I think of a packed Sanctuary in my first congregation (we stacked the deck a bit by inviting the whole congregation), with Pastor Jim Lundeen across the rail from us. We remember special guests who were there: especially some who are no longer with us. We even ran out of wine, but rather than turn to ceremonial water jars, we sent my roommate out for a few additional bottles. Memories were created that day that will accompany us to our graves, and I'd guess that is true for many of you as well.

For some couples, the memories are not all positive. Despite the best-laid plans, some weddings just seem to go haywire. Certain television shows have broadcast video clips of brides falling into their wedding cakes, of groomsmen fainting and knocking over the candelabra, of missing rings, of precocious children. Things don't always go as planned: some weddings are best described as disastrous.

In this morning's Gospel lesson we read of a wedding gone haywire. It was in Cana of Galilee, John tells us. Jesus and his disciples and his mother attended that wedding. You can imagine the pride of the bride and groom's families. This wedding probably was the social event of their lifetime. In a small town, where great festivities were few and far between, there is little doubt that the bride's family had invested just about everything they had in the celebration. This was their chance to host the whole village, and they wanted it to be a time to remember.

Unfortunately, it was on the verge of being unforgettable – but not in the way that family had hoped it would. Mid-way through the celebration, the wine ran out. How deeply embarrassing that must have been for them. With the whole town there to stand witness, it was about to become evident that this family had utterly failed in their responsibility to take care of the needs of their guests. It was a remarkable failure, and they would have to live with the shame of that failure for the rest of their lives. Can you imagine the parents, walking into town the next week, with everyone snickering and shaking their heads at them? This was definitely a wedding gone haywire.

FIRST LESSON

ISAIAH 62:1-5

PSALM

PSALM 36: 5-10

OR

ST. LUKE 1:47-55

SECOND LESSON

1ST CORINTHIANS 12:1-11

GOSPEL LESSON

ST. JOHN 2:1-11

PRAYER OF THE DAY

LORD GOD, YOU SHOWED YOUR GLORY AND LED MANY TO FAITH BY THE WORKS OF YOUR SON. AS HE BROUGHT GLADNESS AND HEALING TO HIS PEOPLE, GRANT US THESE SAME GIFTS AND LEAD US ALSO TO PERFECT FAITH IN HIM, JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD. AMEN.

9300 E. BELLEVUE AVE.
GREENWOOD VILLAGE,
COLORADO 80111

VOICE

(303) 770-9300

FAX

(303) 770-9301

WEB

WWW.STPLC.ORG



Enter Jesus. He hadn't come to make sure everything went smoothly. When his mother first approached him he sounded offended that she would ask him to do anything about it. He wasn't ready for his power to be seen publicly yet. He wanted to hang back in the crowd and do nothing. And it seems, at first, as though that is exactly what he would do. But for some unknown reason, he followed his mother's lead. He had the hired hands fill six great water jars with water. Before anyone knew what had happened, a transformation had taken place. The water, of course, had miraculously been transformed into the best wine those guests had tasted in a long time. But transformation took place in a couple of other ways that day as well: a wedding feast about to grind to a halt was transformed into a continuing celebration. The deep shame of those who hosted that banquet was transformed into a sense of relief that the party could go on. And most importantly, those first couple of disciples who began to follow Jesus were transformed into people *who believed in him*.

That, of course, is John's main agenda in writing this Gospel. He tells us as much in the 20th chapter. There, we read:

*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 come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.*ⁱ

John's Gospel, Jesus' ministry, this morning's lesson... they're all about believing in Jesus Christ – all about experiencing life in his name – all about being transformed. And frankly, we see that time and time again when Jesus enters into people's lives. Convicted adulterers, dishonest tax collectors, wealthy young men, fishermen working on their nets, the blind, the lame, the deaf, even a criminal whose crime had been so horrendous that he was sentenced to be crucified. Jesus stepped into each of these lives with the presence of God – with the power of faith – with the gift of holy transformation, and many of these people were changed forever. "Life in his name" was an entirely different way to live. They walked away from their fifteen minutes with Jesus, and were never the same again.

This is the Jesus who is revealed to us during the Epiphany season. This is the Jesus you and I are called to follow. To follow him means to be co-workers with him in welcoming others into "life in his name." To follow him means to be coworkers with him in transforming lives: in our personal lives, in the ministries we sponsor as a congregation, at work, at home, at school – Jesus seeks to transform us with the power of God's love, and to shape us into a transforming presence in this world.

At Saint Peter, we believe that God wants to make a difference in our lives. That is the notion which lies at the heart of the changes we are proposing for our congregation this year. Next month, after our annual congregation meeting, we will be completely re-organizing our central leadership group. This year we have sought out individuals who are willing to serve on our Congregation Council with a completely different set of objectives. They have agreed to meet monthly for their own spiritual development and renewal. They have agreed to develop ministry teams that will strengthen Saint Peter's approach to ministry. They have agreed to do the kind of work together that we hope will lead to transformed ministries, transformed leaders, and transformed lives. I'm so grateful for their willingness to serve. I am excited about the prospect of working with them in 2007. And I ask you to keep them in your daily prayers all year long.

Their desire to be open to transformation, and to be part of the transformation of this congregation, lies at the heart of what Christ was trying to do in the first century, and what he wants for us today. When we reach the end of our journey, I doubt that Christ will ask us how many committee meetings we attended, or led. Instead, I imagine there being a lot more interest in how many lives were transformed. How many people found comfort in the message of the Gospel? How many were inspired to make profound changes in the way they prioritized their lives? How many young people met a God who is real and powerful and loving? How many families were strengthened by inviting Christ to dwell in their midst? How many people in crisis were assured of God's powerful love? Christ is one who comes with a transforming power, and perhaps the best measure of our own faithfulness as a congregation is the degree to which that transformation moves through us to make a difference in other people's lives.

Christians who just go through the motions and act like religious people are a dime a dozen. However, the faithful disciple of Jesus is the one through whom Jesus' transforming power moves. Someone who has been so deeply touched by the Gospel, that they find themselves looking at the world entirely differently. Someone who has caught a fire for living out his or her faith from day to day. Someone who has a passion for making a difference in the lives of others for Christ's sake. That's the kind of effect Jesus wants to have on each of us – the kind of effect that St. John describes in his Gospel account.

And so this morning we remember the day when Jesus transformed water into wine, and embarrassment into celebration, and disciples into believers. We pray that his transforming power might continue to move through the bread and the wine and the word in a way that makes a difference in our lives. And we ask that through our faithfulness, as a congregation and as individuals, God might work to continue the transformation that was begun in the life and ministry of our Lord. That, indeed, is the measure of our faithfulness. May we be found to be true to the one who seek to touch our hearts and lives.

Amen.

David J. Risendal, Pastor (January 14, 2007)

English Text: ⁱ

^{2.1} On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. ² Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. ³ When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." ⁴ And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come." ⁵ His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." ⁶ Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. ⁷ Jesus said to them, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. ⁸ He said to them, "Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward." So they took it. ⁹ When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom ¹⁰ and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now." ¹¹ Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him." ⁱⁱ

ⁱ A list of Bible lessons for the coming weeks is available at http://www.elca.org/dcm/worship/church_year/lectionary.html.

ⁱⁱ St. John 2:1-11, New Revised Standard Version Bible (© 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America).

Greek Text:

^{2.1} Καὶ τῆς ἡμέρας τῆς τρίτης γάμος ἐγένετο ἐν Κανὰ τῆς Γαλιλαίας, καὶ ἦν ἡ μήτηρ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἐκεῖ· ² ἐκλήθη δὲ καὶ ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ εἰς τὸν γάμον· ³ καὶ ὑστερήσαντος οἴνου λέγει ἡ μήτηρ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ πρὸς αὐτόν· οἴνον οὐκ ἔχουσιν· ⁴ [καὶ] λέγει αὐτῇ ὁ Ἰησοῦς· τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί, γύναι; οὐπω ἦκει ἡ ὥρα μου· ⁵ λέγει ἡ μήτηρ αὐτοῦ τοῖς διακόνοις· ὅ τι ἂν λέγη ὑμῖν ποιήσατε· ⁶ ἦσαν δὲ ἐκεῖ λίθιναι ὑδρίαὶ ἕξ κατὰ τὸν καθαρισμὸν τῶν Ἰουδαίων κείμεναι, χωροῦσαι ἀνὰ μετρητὰς δύο ἢ τρεῖς· ⁷ λέγει αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς· γεμίσατε τὰς ὑδρίας ὕδατος· καὶ ἐγένεσαν αὐτὰς ἕως ἄνω· ⁸ καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς· ἀντλήσατε νῦν καὶ φέρετε τῷ ἀρχιτρικλίνῳ· οἱ δὲ ἠνεγκαν· ⁹ ὡς δὲ ἐγεύσατο ὁ ἀρχιτρικλίνος τὸ ὕδωρ οἴνον γεγεννημένον καὶ οὐκ ᾔδει πόθεν ἐστίν, οἱ δὲ διάκονοι ᾔδεισαν οἱ ἠντληκότες τὸ ὕδωρ, φωνεῖ τὸν νυμφίον ὁ ἀρχιτρικλίνος ¹⁰ καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ· πᾶς ἄνθρωπος πρῶτον τὸν καλὸν οἴνον τίθησιν καὶ ὅταν μεθυσθῶσιν τὸν ἐλάσσω· σὺ τετήρηκας τὸν καλὸν οἴνον ἕως ἄρτι· ¹¹ Ταύτην ἐποίησεν ἀρχὴν τῶν σημείων ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐν Κανὰ τῆς Γαλιλαίας καὶ ἐφάνερωσεν τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐπίστευσαν εἰς αὐτὸν οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ· ⁱⁱⁱ

ⁱ St. John 20:30-31, *New Revised Version Bible* (© 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America).

ⁱⁱⁱ St. John 2:1-11, *The Greek New Testament*, Aland, Kurt, Black, Matthew, Martini, Carlo M., Metzger, Bruce M., and Wikgren, Allen, (© 1983, Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft Stuttgart).