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Epiphany 2 – John 2:1-11 – Jesus’ Glory Revealed!

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What a glorious day it is! So says the pastor to try to jump start his sermon with a bit of excitement. But honestly, is it really? I mean, what makes today any better or any different than any other one? Other than it’s really cold out and the days are really short and a lot of people have pretty well had it with winter already? Truth be told, we’re kind of in this pocket between the Christmas season and the beginning of Lent where everyone deflates for a bit and braces for the busy months ahead that are going to last through graduation in May. There’s not a whole lot that’s really all that glorious about these winter doldrum days on the surface.

But I have to tell you, it’s these times that aren’t so totally busy that really allow us to see God’s glory in the way that Jesus’ disciples did in our Gospel lesson for today, because amidst the noise and busyness of this world all around us, the way our God comes to us is simple, subdued, and meant just for believing eyes and ears. See, the disciples were at a wedding, which in those days was a week-long, super bigtime celebration. Well, that wedding became the occasion when the disciples got to see Jesus’ glory revealed in mercy, in power, and in faith, and that glory reveals the Savior that we all need and long for.

So this story opens up with the wedding couple who were throwing this party in a pretty serious pickle. Before the celebration was over and everyone was still there, they ran out of wine. That was a really shameful thing in that day and culture, because it meant that they couldn’t provide for the people they had invited to come and stay and celebrate with them. In fact, this was a serious enough offense that they might have even been legally liable to make restitution for not putting on a feast that was up to the expected standard! Well who would want to start out their married life with that kind of burden hanging over their heads, so Jesus’ mother Mary took it upon herself to try to help this couple. She goes to Jesus, her son, and says, “*They have no more wine.*”

Now what exactly she was thinking there, I don’t know for sure. Charitably, let’s say she remembered angels praising Jesus as a baby, wise men worshiping Jesus as a toddler, and Jesus showing divine wisdom and knowledge at the temple as a twelve year old boy, so she knew if anyone could help, it was him. Her heart was in the right place to trust him, but maybe she was just a little bit presumptuous about how she thought he should go about his work. “*Dear woman, why do you involve me?*” Jesus replied. “*My time has not yet come.*”

The time would come for Jesus to stand up, call everyone to himself, and reveal himself publicly for everyone to see as a great teacher and miracle worker, but that time wasn’t just yet. That time, in fact, wouldn’t fully come until Jesus was lifted up on the cross. But here Jesus was still setting a foundation for his disciples personally to trust him and follow him through thick and thin, and that timeline wasn’t up for debate. Revealing himself as God’s true Messiah was a delicate process that would take time to do right because of all the wrong ideas out there about who he was expected to be, and Jesus didn’t want anybody to think that he was just some circus act looking for oohs and aahs. So he was trying to handle this privately and keep it close to his chest.

But don’t hear in Jesus’ words there a stern rebuke toward his mother. Hear the mercy not to concentrate on the bad, but rather to focus on the kernel of good that Mary did believe in him and did believe that if anyone could do something to help, even up to and including something wonderful and miraculous, it was Jesus. “*Do whatever he tells you,*” she said. Mary may not have seen the whole picture or approached Jesus perfectly here, but Jesus had the heart to see that she only wanted what was best and she knew that whatever it was, Jesus could do it. And friends, just know that when you come to the Lord with that same attitude, you too will find that same mercy. When in faith you “*Do whatever he tells you,*” know that Jesus will never let you down. He always does right by his children, and his purpose in our life is always to help us and bless us, never to harm us or burn us. And even when your plans might not match up perfectly with his, then say humbly, “not my will, Lord, but yours be done,” and be assured that whatever he has in mind for you is always best.

That day, the disciples saw Jesus' glory revealed in mercy – toward Mary especially, but then also toward the wedding couple. And what they saw wasn't just his mercy – it was also his power. What could have been an ugly liability for this poor, young couple, Jesus instead was about to turn into an unbelievable asset. After Jesus' mother told him that all the wine was gone, Jesus went to the household servants and said, "*Fill the jars with water,*" and "*Draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet.*" As they did so, Jesus turned all that water into wine – maybe as much as 600-900 bottles' worth by our modern standards. That was an amazing amount of wine! But think about how he did it and how far he went in doing it – he had the special authority to give directions to these servants, and they just followed him; they just did what he said, no questions asked. Just with his Word, he shattered the laws of nature and changed plain old water into real, honest-to-goodness grape wine – as poets of the past have put it, at that wedding in Cana, "the water met its Master and blushed." And Jesus did that so well that not only was the master of the banquet – an expert in these things, the one with the most refined palate in the room – fully convinced, but he was also fully blown away by the result. What Jesus did here wasn't just *enough*, wasn't just *passable* – it was delicious and delightful and abundant, because that's how good and gracious our Savior is. Nobody ever did it as well as Jesus did it here for this new bride and groom.

And maybe nobody quite realized it right then, but that's the way Jesus reveals his power in this world and for his people. "*Everyone brings out the choice wine first,*" the banquet master said, "*and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now.*" Well Jesus doesn't do things the way *everyone else* does, and thank God for that. Jesus saved the best for last then, and he promises that he saves the best for last for us, too. Our lives might have their anxious times when we don't quite know the way everything is going to shake out, just like it was for that bride and groom, but what we *do* know is that Jesus didn't come to give us a life that is tasteless and sterile. He came to multiply our joy and deliver delight beyond our wildest dreams. With our Savior-God, the best always comes out in the end both in this life and especially in the next.

No, nothing is impossible for the one who with a Word spoke the heavens and earth into existence and with a Word changed water into wine, and nothing is impossible for the one who with a Word still promises that he rules all things for your good. When we watch with the eyes of faith, he always comes through, even when we might not expect it. So when was the last time Jesus did that kind of miracle for you? When was the last time Jesus answered your prayer seemingly out of thin air? Well, have you ever wondered where the money came from in your bank account to get by with bills for yet another month when you didn't know how it was going to happen? Have you ever wondered how the door opened to the perfect opportunity at just the right time? Have you ever wondered how you ever got to be so blessed in your life? Well, look no further than here, and see with the disciples Jesus' glory revealed in power, because just the same as he worked then, so also he still works now to care for us in greater and more gracious ways than we could ever imagine.

Yes, the disciples saw amazing things that day, and they reacted exactly how Jesus wanted them to. "*He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.*" When Jesus reveals his glory to his people, he doesn't do it to impress anybody or just to get those oohs and aahs. No, he always does it for the reason that John tells us a little later in his Gospel: "*that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name*" (John 20:31). And that's what makes this day so glorious, too. Maybe on the surface it doesn't seem all that great. But here is the glory of faith. The glory of forgiveness. The glory of salvation. Because here just the same as in our story, we have Jesus' Word of promise that like a signpost points us unmistakably to the good news of our Savior who lived and died and rose again for us! Today our blessings don't come from stone jars for ceremonial washing, but from the washing of holy baptism that promises us a place at the wedding feast of the Lamb in eternity. Today we get to come to the Lord's Supper where by his own Word water is not merely changed into wine, but bread and wine are joined together with Jesus' true body and blood given and shed for you for the forgiveness of all of your sins. That's real glory, that's the glory we are blessed to share week in and week out by God's grace, and that's the glory Jesus reveals for our eternal salvation. Yes truly, what a glorious day it is! Amen.