

✠ John 2:1-11 ✠

### In Nomine Iesu

The wedding feast at Cana; it is a well-known narrative. This is when the Lord Jesus Christ changed water into wine. A fact we Lutherans should particularly like because, 1) Jesus here shows us that He is not adverse to the fermented drink, and 2) because it wasn't watered down but the very best fermented drink, that our Lord made. The Lord does indeed give to His children all good gifts.

Here at the wedding at Cana is where our Lord manifests His glory for the first time, so says the holy evangelist St. John. As much as some would like to capitalize on it and dream about it, there are no stories of the boy Jesus miraculously rising felled pigeons from the dead or supernaturally healing the skinned knees of His childhood playmates. No, He did not miraculously cause the sweet cakes to multiply a thousand fold after supper or find His childhood allowance in the mouths of fish. This was the first of His signs, changing water into wine. And by it, He manifested His glory.

What a remarkable thing this is. Jesus, the Son of God who has already had the witness of the Holy Spirit descend upon Him at His baptism; has already had the confirming voice of the Father spoken over Him, that He is God's Son; has already been forty days in the wilderness being tempted by the evil one and suffering hunger and thirst; has already begun to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"; chooses to reveal His glory here at a wedding by changing water into wine.

He did not choose to restore the flesh of a leper to or open the eyes of the blind; he did not choose to walk on water or open deaf ears and muted mouths; he did not choose to multiply bread and fish a thousand-fold; he did not even choose to raise the dead to manifest His glory. No, the Son of God chose to change water into wine at the feast of a wedding.

Perhaps He was saving the seemingly better miracles for later, when there would be a larger crowd and a more desperate atmosphere; when men and women would look to him in agony and pain, sweat and tears, begging for healing or for the restoration of their dead sons and daughters.

Perhaps our Lord thought this would be a gentle way to break the news to His mother and those who followed Him that He is the Master of creation and Lord of the Sabbath. Better not to frighten them with having dead Lazarus walk out of the tomb or Himself walk upon water as if it were the driest of land. Better to break the news that He is truly God in the flesh in a more congenial manner than with thunder, lightening, and tempest. Perhaps there is some truth to this. After all, God does not give us more than we, in our faith, can bear. But as so often with our Lord, there seems to be more going on here than meets the eye.

The surroundings were not a desolate wasteland or the tombs of the dead. There was no demon-possessed man thrashing about and there was no violent storm that sought the lives of His disciples. This was a wedding. It was a happy occasion. Doubtless there was grand entertainment; lively music and dance; and a variety of games played by the young and old alike. The fact that the master of the feast thought that most everyone was already three sheets to the wind is a good indication of the time these folks were having. These weddings in first-century Palestine were not ones that met at the synagogue, took a few forced-smile

photos, and then rushed off to a fun albeit controlled reception for an hour or two. No, weddings were celebrated for days at a time. In a small town the entire town would shut down for this event. It seemed as though there would never be an end to the dancing, meat, and drink. They were full of life, dancing, music, and laughter. And here, in the midst of all this, sat Jesus. And even He, who is never depicted as even so much as smiling in the four gospel accounts, must have been having a good time; laughing and enjoying family and friends.

It is here that our Lord chose to manifest His glory. It is here amidst laughter and joy, friends and family, music and dancing that the one whose flesh would be ripped from His bones by cords of glass and stone; whose scalp would be torn by a crown of thorns; whose body would be beaten with blows upon blow from fist and staff; whose hands and feet would be riveted to blanks of wood with nails; whose body would hang naked and limp, struggling to breathe and finally die in agony; it is here, in the midst of joy and peace that Jesus chose to manifest His glory.

Here at this happy and wondrous occasion, Jesus changed water into wine. Our Lord demonstrates that He is Lord over creation, that He is Master of the elements. He showed those who were at the wedding, His mother, disciples, and the servants of the feast, and He shows us, that He is aware of our needs and wants and that He has the power to fulfill them. Here, at an already happy occasion, Jesus makes it more glorious; here in an already excited atmosphere, Jesus adds an air of wonder and enchantment. But this is not just a story from which we learn that Jesus loves us, provides for us, and want the very best for us, this is the manifestation of the glory of the Son of God, the Son of Mary.

Imagine His mother's peeked interest when she watches the servants obey the voice of her Son as He tells them to fill the water jars and to take the now-changed-water-into-wine to the master of the feast, and then her stunned surprise when the headmaster of the feast calls what she knew to be water, the best of wines. In our mind's eye we can see her and Jesus' disciples slowly turn their eyes to this Man who has just done the impossible, mouths agape with amazement and minds boggled with the evidence before them. What manner of Man is this who can call that which is not as if it were and that which is as if it were not?

It can rightly be said that from this we learn that Jesus gives good gifts, as He gave the good gift of good wine to the young couple; gifts that no one else can give. We can learn from this that Jesus is the answer to our problems, that no problem is too small or insignificant to come to Jesus with. And this is true. It could easily be gleaned from this passage of Scripture that Jesus wants us to be happy and content; that He wants us to be satisfied and taken care of. This, too, is true. Jesus does desire our happiness, contentment, satisfaction, and well-being. But do not mistake the iceberg for the tip that breaks the surface of the deep.

It would be just like the devil to tempt us with these wonderful gifts of happiness, contentment, well-being, and satisfaction, that our Lord does desire for us, and deceive us so that we miss the point and are misled into false belief, despair and other great shame or vice. Yet I can hear the question, "What is wrong with thinking that Jesus wants us to be happy and so forth?" It is not that, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ. But let me ask: if it is happiness that our Lord desires for us, then why are we not happy? If it is contentment that our Savior wishes us to possess, then why are we so unfulfilled? Why do we think bigger homes and better cars, more vacation and gentler careers, more pay and more understanding spouses would make us happier and more fulfilled? If it is satisfaction and well-being that we are to have according to our Lord's pleasure, then why are we so unsatisfied and seem to be so miserable in life, liberty, and property? So goes the guile of that ancient serpent.

You see it is not in Jesus wanting our happiness or fulfillment that the lie lays in wait, it is in thinking that we do not yet have it that the father of lies plants his seed.

But do not be misled. For though our Lord wishes us to have good and pleasing things in this life, He desires all the more that the good gift He gives us is the forgiveness of our sins, life in His name, and an everlasting blessed inheritance of standing before God in righteousness and purity. These are indeed good and right gifts that no one else can bestow upon us. More than food and drink, house and home, wife and child, which God even gives to evil people, our Lord and Savior gives to us the food of eternal life, the drink of righteousness, the mansion of heaven, and the marriage of the Lamb of God to His Church.

Jesus does not leave us without the true meaning of things. Imagine, if you will, the mother of Jesus, knowing of His divine birth and of the witness He received in the waters of the Jordan enjoying herself only to acquire the information that the party, probably just getting started, had run short of wine. She knew her Son was special; perhaps He could do something about it. "Jesus," a mother's sweet convincing voice says, "they've run out of wine." To which Jesus responds, "What have you to do with me?" That is, how does the information you bring me concern me? "My time has not yet come."

Jesus is telling His mother, "Do you think that I have come merely to change water into wine, or to heal the sick and open the eyes of the blind. Do not let what you are about to see define who I am, but let it be a sign to you that I come with authority. The sign you see before you is just that: a sign. It is not the end in itself; it is not to be looked for or imitated; it is to point to me. Watch me closely and you will follow my signs to the cross. For my purpose is to do the will of Him who sent me; that is, to pay for the sins of the world with my blood. I have come to die for your sins.

"Now I change water into wine; later I will heal the leper and the diseased; I will open the ears of the deaf and the eyes of the blind, and I will give speech to the mute; I will cast out demons and raise the dead, and there will be many who will be awed by these signs and look to them for greater significance than they bestow, there will be those who tell you that you must imitate these signs or you are not really my disciples. There will be those who will tell you that these signs are the real things to be looked at because they demonstrate my love. But do not listen to those false wolves who only desire to devour the sheep and not feed them. Do not let these signs be your gods, for they are merely signs pointing to my true purpose.

"My love is demonstrated in this: that I lay down my life for the sheep. Your devotion to me is demonstrated in this: that you love one another, by this all men will know that you are my disciples. Not if you change water into wine or cast out demons, but if you love one another.

"When my time has come I will change the wine into my blood; I will cleanse the leprosy of sin; I will open the ears of the sinner so that he will hear my life-giving words; I will open the eyes of the blind that they may see my glory; I will loose the tongues of the mute that they may give praises in my name; I will cast out the evil within you and will raise you who are dead in your sins to life in my name."

Oh happy day that is upon us! Here we celebrate not the marriage of a man and woman, but the marriage feast of the Lamb where the water is changed into life-giving water rich in grace and a washing of the new birth in the Holy Spirit, and where the wine is changed to the blood of Christ and will never run dry. Here we see the manifestation of the glory of Jesus as He is risen from the dead and lives and reigns to all eternity. The wedding feast at Cana gives us a picture of heaven itself: Jesus providing for us the drink that brings us happiness, joy,

contentment, and satisfaction. It is as He said, “Whoever drinks the water I will give him will never thirst again; indeed the water I give him will become a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” Such is the water of Jesus, come drink the wine made blood and eat the bread made flesh for the forgiveness of sins, for in this is true happiness, true contentment, true satisfaction, true fulfillment; this is the marriage feast of the Lamb.

In the name of the FATHER and of the ✠ SON and of the HOLY SPIRIT.

✠ AMEN ✠