

The Second Sunday after the Festival of the Epiphany of our Lord
St. John 2:1-11
January 20th, 2019
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
St. Michael and All Angels Evangelical Lutheran Mission, UAC
Augusta, GA
Pastor Jerald Dulas

This Beginning of Signs Jesus Did

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

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

The glory of our Lord + Jesus Christ was manifested in Cana at the turning of water into wine. It seems a strange miracle. The giving of so much and such good quality of wine to those who are already “well-drunk” seems odd to our pietistic natures. But our Lord + Jesus is always lavish in His benefits for us. He always gives more than is needed by us. St. John the Baptist came neither eating or drinking. But our Lord’s time is not the time of fasting, but of feasting. He has come to make glad the hearts of men and to take for Himself a Bride, Immaculate and Holy.

Nonetheless, we cannot help but think how strange the whole situation was. There at Cana are the greatest pleasures and the greatest dangers known to man: the marriage bed and wine. And while they seem almost always to go together, they do not typically mix very well.

This Gospel reading from the Evangelist St. John brings to mind two of our Lord God’s greatest earthly pleasures: sex, which is one of the benefits of marriage, and wine, which makes glad the hearts of man. Nothing else can create such euphoria for us; can give us such a heavenly experience. But also, nothing else is so subject to abuse or perversion or so quickly turned into a weapon. Fire is a trifling amusement compared to the burning in the loins, bellies, and minds of men. God has given us sex not merely for pleasure and the bonding of one man and one woman in holy matrimony. He also has given it to us for the procreation of children. Yet we have so perverted it that conception is treated almost as a curse, especially by our society that believes that a conceived child is just a bunch of cells that can be discarded at the desire of their own selfish will. We have so degraded and abused this gift of procreation in marriage that much of what mankind does cannot even result in conception.

The same is true with wine. There are serious health benefits in wine mainly sterilization and numbing, as well as the pleasure that it gives. There are those who say that a glass of red wine a day is supposed to be good for the circulation of one’s heart. Yet, the abuse of wine has caused so much harm and ruined so many once-good people, and its powers of enslavement to alcoholism are well known. Who has not thought that wine, and all liquor, should be done away with especially the morning after enjoying too much wine when your head and whole body seems to be warring against you?

Perhaps it would be better if we removed the possibility of having sex and drinking wine from our children. Then they could pursue the finer things in life uninhibited by the temptations they produce. They would be free to love a wife for all the right reasons and find it easy to be faithful to her. They would be able to drink wine with discipline and for health, not for taste and getting drunk. If the ability to enjoy these pleasures was removed from them, would they not waste far less time on vain pursuits? Being free of these temptations and thus capable of living a life free of these sins, could they not do more good deeds for the world? Perhaps. But I doubt it. They would know they had been cheated, that we had stolen from them something of the goodness of life, including the ability to have sons of their own. This is how our children first rebel against us, by doing all the things we warned them about in the first place, to our great chagrin. When the punishment for breaking the Law is the only motivating factor for us to keep the Law, then when the punishment is no longer seen to be a threat, we believe we are free to do whatever evil desires are in our hearts.

However, God's gifts are always lavish and extravagant, always better than we deserve, and always subject to abuse. None more so than grace itself, than the forgiveness of sins, that God so recklessly gives to us sinful lustful drunks. But for all of that, for all the abuse to which we subject God's good gifts, we would be spiritually dead without His grace shown to us on account of our faith in our Lord + Jesus Christ.

Man's thirst is not quenched by water alone, but by every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God. That Word from the mouth of God has taken upon Himself our flesh. He makes our hearts glad through His incarnation. He is the new and better wine that we drink every Sunday which He connects to His Blood and to which He attaches His Body in with and under bread. He pours out upon our tongues His Holy Ghost to create and sustain faith in us. Just like He did for the Apostles on Whitsunday when His Holy Ghost so filled those who believe on Him that on-lookers thought they were drunk in the middle of the morning.

He gives wine to His Bride, the Church, both for her pleasure and for her sanctification. He Himself abstained while on this earth before His hour came. Here is the wisdom He breathed into the mother of King Lemuel, as recorded by King Solomon, *"It is not for kings to drink wine, nor for princes intoxicating drink; Lest they drink and forget the law, and pervert the justice of all the afflicted."* Instead, the king is told to *"Give strong drink to him who is perishing, and wine to those who are bitter of heart. Let him drink and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more."*

Our Lord drinks with us now in His Father's Kingdom according to His Last Will and Testament for His hour has now come. He abstained once, so that He would not be dulled on the tree of the holy cross, for He did not want to forget the Law or pervert justice and come down. He would not shirk His duty, but suffered in our place, endured our shame, and bore our affliction. There was no mitigation, no relief or anesthesia for Him. But even in the midst of His sorrow, He gave His Bride, the Church, strong drink, that she would have joy. On the night in which He was betrayed, to prepare them for what was to come, He gave them wine from His own heart. He still gives that same wine, His very Blood, to this day, some neglect it, refuse it, and even abuse it. But He keeps on giving it. For He Who is eternal knows that we are perishing, that our bodies are in decline, that our marriages and society are frail and under constant attack and that we ourselves are weak with desire and besieged by temptation. Our hearts are bitter with failure, with compromise and fear.

Therefore, in this miracle of Cana; of turning water into wine, He manifests His glory. He reveals that He is the One, True, Messiah come to redeem us from sin, death and the devil. This is only the beginning of the signs which He did. For, He also pours out for us the cleansing wine and water from His heart. From the water we receive the washing of eternal life in Holy Baptism. In the wine He gives us the Holy Sacrament of the Altar for us Christians to eat and to drink for the forgiveness of our sins.

He gives His Blood in wine—together with His Body in, with and under the bread—that we should forget our poverty and misery, and enjoy even now the foretaste of the Kingdom to come, and that He would make our hearts glad in Him through our faith which trusts and relies upon His promises and gifts. He fills us to the brim with love for Him and for our fellowman, even as He is ready to love us again, to make us His, through the forgiveness of our sins. By His grace we hear His Word, we believe in Him, and we are made glad to have received from Him forgiveness of sins, eternal life and salvation. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory! I will extol Thee, O Lord, and I will praise Thy Name forever and ever. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria!