

## Sermon Transcript for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Epiphany, January 17, 2021

At first glance, it seems to be all over the place as far as what is the theme of the day. We got the water into wine, Jesus' first miracle. We have Moses begging the Lord to show him His glory and His pleasure so that he might know that he has found favor with God. And God says, "You can't see my full glory but you can see just the back of my glory as I pass by." And then you've got Romans here talking about the gifts that God has given to us and that we should use them to support one another, to outdo each other with honor, and to have zeal for one another and outdo each other's love in brotherly affection. And pray for those who persecute us, be constant in prayer in all situations, even in times of tribulation and persecution, and to join in rejoicing and weeping and living in harmony with one another.

Now, all of this being said, these things really talk about God intervening and connecting with us in our normal everyday life. Moses wanted to see the glory of God. He wanted to know with absolute confidence the favor of God was upon him. And God told him that the favor was upon him but he still wanted to see it. Now, if God had shown His complete glory, there's no way Moses could have survived. So God just shows a glimpse, sort of the back of it, as it's passing by. Moses gets a glimpse of the glory of God.

And here in Cana, rather than seeing this as just some pittance of a miracle, why didn't God do something greater? Here we see the normalcy of God's presence in our lives, the presence of God in everyday affairs. We don't see the fullness of His glory because no one can handle that at this point. But we do see Him acting and we see the backside of His glory, turning water into wine. In the grand scheme of things, it really probably didn't mean a whole lot. The wedding could have gone on without this wine. People might have grumbled and complained, "Man, they ran out of wine. That was a horrible party." But the reality is in eternity's view, it probably would not have affected much of anything.

And yet here is where God blesses. In the mundane, in the regular, in the normal, in the ordinary, we are to find and see God in His glory in everything, in all of our interactions. And even especially with that husband and wife interaction, being the primary source of demonstrating love to our neighbor and befriending our neighbor. Because our spouse is that closest neighbor, and then our children afterwards. Being our closest neighbor is that we are called to teach them, to love them and to be patient with them so that they might know the grace of God.

And also in the wedding feast we hear when God talks about marriage. In Ephesians, through Paul, it talks about how marriage is a sign and a symbol or a connection to the bridegroom marrying the bride. And that means that Christ is the bridegroom and the church is the bride. And so we see in marriage that reflection of God's relationship with us on a regular, everyday scale. That He loves us, that He is jealous for us, that He doesn't want us following after other things that give us a false sense of security. He wants us to put our trust completely and utterly in Him. And in doing so, then we can walk and not be afraid when tribulations and trials and prosecutions come our way.

And while we have been fortunate in America that that has not happened, we're also seeing some signs where the culture is moving away from us. And they are beginning to say that what the church teaches is not right and good, especially with the ideas of marriage and sexual identity. And so there is going to come a time, I think very soon, where we are going to have to stand firm against persecution and tribulation. And here we have a way of facing that, to love each other, even those that hate us and persecute us, and to outdo each other in honor and zeal, to be patient with one another, to pray for those who persecute you.

It sounds an awful lot like the early Christians in the arena when they were faced with gladiators or being torn apart by wild animals. What was a great testimony to the Roman people was the fact that the Christians were at peace even as they were being murdered and killed because they knew where their

hope came from. They knew where their trust came from, they knew that God, the bridegroom had kept them as the church in His loving care and even in death He would not forsake them, and so they could stand firm.

Now, there's a part of me as an American that would like to stand firm by standing for my rights and fighting and all of this other stuff, but really what Scripture tells us to do is to focus upon the everyday, the regular and the normal, and to see God's glory in all of that. Not many of us were wise or powerful as we read last week, but all of us can show love to a neighbor, to a friend, to the person down the street, to the cashier. These are ways that we can communicate and show the love of God. We can even show love to the people that are being rude and disrespectful, and we can share the love of God and as such, "pour burning coals upon their head" as they realize that they are not acting in a way that is pleasing to God.

Why do we have this as part of Epiphany, this water to wine? Because one, God values our lives, especially He values that relationship of husband and wife. That is the place where His Word is most dearly communicated to the children that are a result of that marriage. And those are the first lines, those are the first lines of evangelism that we have, our children, and then our neighbors and so on and so forth. But ultimately it also is to show that God loves us so much that He binds Himself to us.

As we spoke last week about the baptism of our Lord, Jesus, He spoke to John and said, "Let us do this so that so we can fulfill all righteousness." God invites us graciously to join with Him in His ministry, in spreading the word of God to those around us. And here as we see God joining us in the regular everyday things of life such as marriage, eating, and drinking, that He invites us to join with Him as His bride to go into the world and declare His glories to a people who do not yet know Him.

Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep, live in harmony with one another. When people are joyful we should not be jealous of them but praise God alongside them. When people are sad we should not lord it over them and thank God that we are not like them, that we didn't have to suffer that but rather to weep with them, to join in their suffering, to walk alongside them that they might know the peace of God through us.

To live in harmony with one another. Don't we need that in our world today, especially in our nation? We can disagree in politics. We can disagree in actions. We can disagree in a lot of things. But that should not drive us to be contentious with one another. What a wonderful witness it is to live in harmony even with those who persecute us, who speak ill of us, who are against us, because we trust God. Our bridegroom will take care of us and we need not be afraid. And never be wise in your own sight. Be humble. Trust God. Trust in His strength. And His power is what gives you hope. And do not be afraid.

This new year we don't know what it's going to bring. More good, more evil? We definitely know that it's going to be some of both. There's going to be times to rejoice. There's going to be times to weep. But in all of those our Lord loves us and cares for us. And He walks alongside of us and He gives us good wine to drink, His own blood, and good food to eat, His own body for the forgiveness of our sins, the strengthening of our faith and the hope and the certainty of everlasting life with Him.

Grace, mercy, and peace be with you always, now and forevermore, unto life everlasting. Amen.