

Sermon Transcript for January 16, 2022

Grace, mercy and peace be unto you from God, our Father, and the Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Today on this terrible weather day, we acknowledge the second Sunday after the Epiphany. Now, if we think of Christmas as the time of gift-giving and God giving us the gift of Jesus, then we consider Epiphany as the unwrapping of that gift to see what is inside or in this case, who is inside. See, Epiphany is the manifestation of Jesus and what he brings to the world and what the gift of God means to us. And the wrapping of this package is unusual and not what people expected. They looked for the Savior of the world to appear in fine satin, royal purple garments trimmed with silver and gold, sitting on a magnificent throne and attended with powerful battle-ready warriors. And what we got was a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger, attended by farm animals. What a radical idea it was to introduce the world to the Savior.

And Jesus comes to the world, lowly, in a state of humility. He lives among us as the least of us. And He's subject to all the dangers and disappointments of the fallen world. Everything that we experience, He's been there, done that; happiness and peace, betrayal, and grief. He also experiences the companionship of His friends and family, just like us. Jesus is truly Emmanuel, just like us, God with us in every way. And Jesus lived among men, not in a palace, not in an earthly kingdom. He lived among men and He participated in life on earth and He caused people to change, radically. Jesus participated in the culture of His times. He did the things people do. He attended church, the synagogue. He attended celebrations, even parades and parties with His friends. And He became a carpenter. We know this as Jesus's state of humiliation. Now that doesn't mean humiliated. It doesn't mean embarrassment, but it means Jesus limits His divinity. He doesn't always or fully use His divine power. And yet in His humility, there is radical change for us. And we shall soon see an example of divine power coming.

So there's a wedding in Cana in Galilee. Now the main concern, other than the bride and groom, for the Jewish festival is hospitality. That is what is important, to make sure everyone has a good time. And the worst thing that can happen at a Jewish feast, which by the way, lasted for several days, is running out of food, or in this case running out of wine. Now Jesus and His mother and the disciples and the guests at this wedding ... And the Jewish wedding was a feast that lasted several days. And then wouldn't you know, the tragedy comes and the wine has run out. This is a terribly embarrassing thing for the master of the feast. And can you imagine somebody running around saying, "Somebody do something! We're out of wine"?

Well, Mary said to Her son, "They have no wine."

And Jesus' response is confusing. He says, "Woman, what does this have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come." So Jesus sets Mary aside gently, but firmly. "It's not My time yet." But Jesus is a beautiful Jewish son and He feels He has to do something to obey His mother. So when she tells the servants to do what He says, 20 or 30 gallons of water were transformed into wine, the finest wine. Now, John, the apostle John, writes that this was the first sign that Jesus performed in the public demonstration of His divine power.

Now that's a radical idea. It's a radical change. Changing 20 to 30 gallons of water into the best wine, Jesus made a radical change in the water. And that had a very powerful impact on His disciples, which caused a radical change in them. And we read that Jesus manifested His glory and His disciples believed in Him. So He had brought them from unbelief to faith. That is a radical change.

And He does the same for you and me. Through His gift of faith, He restores us to God as His own children forever through the forgiveness of sin. That is why we are here today. The grace of God makes a radical change in our lives. Now because we have a new relationship with God, Jesus begins to radically change our perception of the world; our values, our priorities, our attitudes toward our neighbors, which is the family of man, by the way, and ourselves. We have become new creatures to live for Him, the One who died for us and rose again, destroying the power of death forever.

Now because we are His children, He radically transforms the plain water of our lives into fine wine. He abides with us in Word and Sacrament so that we can move from unbelief to faith, from selfishness to love, from despair to hope. Our mistakes in our lives are not fatal. Our lives are not futile. And we can learn lessons from our mistakes. We can learn from Jesus as our example of how to live here and now. We can learn from Him, and we can treasure God's gift with our lives forever.

Sometimes in this complicated world, those things get overlooked and they're not emphasized. They're deemphasized, as a matter of fact. But it doesn't change the truth of the matter, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who came to this earth to pay for our sin and to be our Savior. And He died and He rose again, destroying whatever the power of death had over us. Death no longer causes us problems, causes us to fear. Death is simply the cessation of this life and the beginning of a new life. So let us all remember the things and turn our watery selves into the finest wine, with good stewardship in prayer and faith.

Amen.