

2nd Sunday after Epiphany, January 15, 2023

Readings: Amos 9:11-15, Ephesians 5:21-33, John 2:1–11

Jesus' First Miracle Reveals God's Glory

The coming of the Messianic kingdom means the restoration of creation. The sign of this restoration is that *"the mountains shall drip sweet wine"* (Amos 9:11–15). When the elements of a fallen creation fail and run short at a wedding feast, our Lord Jesus steps in to restore creation and miraculously changes water into an abundance of the very best wine (John 2:1–11). With this sign, Christ manifests His glory. The *"back"* of God (Ex. 33:12–23) is revealed to those who believe. The hour will come when Jesus will again manifest His glory by taking creation's curse into His own body to release us from its power. The Bridegroom will give His life for the Bride (Eph. 5:22–32), and from His side will flow water and blood, the holy sacraments by which she is cleansed and made one with Him. Through this sacrificial love of Christ we are enabled to *"love one another With brotherly affection . . ."* and to *"outdo one another in showing honor"* (Rom. 12:6–16).

Sermon Transcript:

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

Hopefully, if you were paying attention to the readings, you notice that I skipped a little bit in the Epistle. Originally, in all the books and all the publications, this reading does start with verse 22, "Wives submit to your own husbands as to the Lord." However, I think we cannot fully understand what that's all talking about unless we get to verse 21 first. But before we get there, this sermon really is not going to be a whole lot about the relationship between husband and wives. If you noticed, if you read the Epistle closely, you noticed that a vast majority of what Paul is talking about really is about the relationship between Christ and His church. And the example of husband and wife serve as a means to get to that discussion and help us understand our relationship between Christ and the church.

But, just so we get this out of the way, husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church, and wives, submit to your husbands out of reverence for Christ. Both of those are important, but neither one of those are more important than the other. We are not talking about the stereotypical man sitting on the couch reading a newspaper asking his wife to get a cup of coffee, because he's the "head of the household." That's not what we're talking about. The head, as it is in Biblical terms, is like Christ. Christ gave up His life for the benefit of His bride, the church. That is what it means to be the head of the house. It's to seek the glory and the importance of his wife more than anything else, to make sure that she is cared for and gets the best of what she needs, so long as even to sacrifice yourself for the sake of your spouse. That's what it means to be the head. So let's just get that out of the way right then and there, okay?

It's different responsibilities but equal submission. The husband submits by being the head, and the wife submits by following after her husband. Both of them submit to each other and both of us submit to Christ. That's really what we're going to be talking about, and that's really what this Epistle is about, and even, surprisingly enough, it's what the Gospel is all about as well. So the Epistle that we have printed, "Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ." Why do we do that? What is the motivation, and where do we get that understanding from? It begins right here with the Gospel lesson.

Now, the Gospel begins, "On the third day, there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee." Now, why in the world do you think John would emphasize that it was the third day? If this is the first of His miracles, it is setting up everything that comes afterwards. This is the first of His signs of what He is going to accomplish. And what is He going to accomplish on the third day at the end of His ministry? He's going to rise from the dead. And so, we are to connect this miracle and the event on the third day and remember and think forward to His death, and more importantly, His resurrection on the third day, the completeness of His ministry, of what He is doing here on earth.

So, His mother comes and talks to Him and says, "There's no more wine." And then, I don't know about you, but many times, at first at least, when I read this, I hear Jesus said, "Woman, what does this have to do with Me? My hour is not yet come." Kind of sounds a little bit of a chastisement, like He's being a little bit harsh to His mom. And that just doesn't sound right. It's true, it doesn't sound right because it's not what He's doing. You see, He is putting His mom in a category with the rest of us. Rather than saying, "Mom, what do you want me to do about this?" He places her in the category of all of us who are in need of His salvation. She is no different than you and me. She needs what Christ is going to accomplish as much as we do.

And so, He's saying, "Woman, what is it that you are hoping for? What is it do you believe in? What are you anticipating?" In other words, He's drawing her to think about what her expectations are of her Son who is the Christ, the Messiah, the one who has come to save us. So He's encouraging her and us. What is it that we expect of Jesus? What do we think He's going to do? Is He just there to make the party go on a little bit longer and make us feel good? Is that what it's about? Or is it about something deeper and more important?

Now, a lot of scholars have tried to figure out why in the world this miracle is recorded. And those who are less inclined to believe the Word of God and think that mankind created these stories, they will look and say, "Well, this is kind of along those lines of all those apocryphal readings where we hear about Jesus as a kid doing all sorts of weird and crazy things. It really isn't that important." But it is. This was specifically put here, this really did happen, and there was a point and a purpose to it. It's one of the most important ones there is; one of the most important miracles that we have.

I know that sounds odd considering Jesus healed the sick and raised people from the dead, but here we have a communication of what it is that He is going to do. Notice, after He tells His mother that His hour has not yet come, He says, "My hour's not yet come, but it has begun, in essence. I'm not here to just do wine, do party favors, I am here to do something more. So my hour has not come, but you should be looking from this point on until that time for what I am doing." So He tells them to go and fill these stone jars with water.

Now, what are these stone jars there for? They're for the rights of purification. Every time the Jewish people gathered together, there were certain rights and rituals they did to purify themselves, or at least to symbolize a purification going on. What does Jesus do? These jars are not yet filled, they're not full. In other words, the purification of the people is not complete until the Word of God comes and fills the jars to their brim. The jars of purification, Jesus fills them with the water that will give life. When we think about the water in the jars of purification, we should be thinking about our baptisms, where the water, connected with the Word of God, purifies us from the sin of this world, and purifies us and makes us His people. Brings us together, as the bride of Christ, the church itself, with the bride groom, Christ Jesus Himself.

He fills these jars of purification. In other words, the Old Testament was a beginning of the purification, but it could not actually purify. It was only finally completed through the Word of God when Jesus says, "Fill them

up." And they fill them up to the brim, overflowing almost. They dip a handle in, and they hand it to the master. He doesn't know what's going on, but the servants do. The people who hear the Word of God, they know what's going on. They've heard the Word and they've seen what happens and they believe. They know where this comes. And they give wine, and it's really good wine. We should be thinking along the lines of the bread and wine here on the table, which is the Body and Blood of Christ for the forgiveness and the purification of our souls, of our bodies. We are being purified by the water and the wine connected with the Word of God. And here it is at the very beginning.

When he drinks the wine, they said, "Man, usually you bring out the good stuff first. And then when the taste buds are a little bit dulled through multiple drinking and whatnot, then you bring out the cheap stuff because nobody's going to care at that point." But this is God Himself, and what does God do? He promises blessing upon blessing, grace upon grace, more than we can possibly imagine, more abundantly does He give than we can possibly even ask to receive. When He created this world, at the end of the sixth day, He looked around at this world and He said, "It is very good."

And then Satan came along and we ate the fruit, and it fell into chaos. But even now when we look at this life, we think it's pretty good, most of the time, generally. But God is saving the best for last. This life in Christ is a blessing and a joy. But when we see Christ again, when our bridegroom finally comes and we are joined with Him in the eternal wedding feast, that is going to be the good stuff. That is going to be the blessing that is beyond compare. That is going to be joy beyond knowledge.

We will be so thankful to be brought together with our bridegroom. We will get the best of the best. We talk about a foretaste of the feast to come. It's not just food. It's our whole lives in Christ. And it's going to be even better when He comes again. And so, this was the first sign, or the preeminent sign, the sign that points to everything else. He is coming to give us purification, and He is coming to give us more good than we can possibly imagine. His disciples saw that, and they believed in Him because He manifested His glory. More than just the wine, it was the glory of where that wine came from, the symbolism of the purification that the bridegroom accomplishes for His bride.

Now, lest we forget Amos, we want to bring Amos into this just a little bit, to see how it connects. At first maybe, the Ephesians and the John passage, you're talking about marriage, and then Amos is talking about restoration and building new towers and restoring the people of Israel to a new land. Again, Amos is a prophet. He's a prophet that is talking to an Israel that has been defeated and has been ravaged by its enemies on multiple times and occasions and will continue throughout history. But he's prophesying about the end. He's prophesying about when Christ comes the second time. We see the glorious gift that Amos sees. What does he say? That the plowman shall overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes who sows. In other words, you can't barely plant before you're harvesting and receiving the benefits. You can't barely start the grapes until you've already got wine. It's so fast and it's so abundant and so marvelous that it's beyond comprehension how much it's going to be and how quickly it will come and how glorious it is.

So the best is yet to come, a time where we will be settled in the land and we will never again be uprooted out of that land. We are foreigners here in this world. We are just traveling in a foreign land. But there is our home. When we die or when Christ comes again, whichever comes first, then that is what we are looking forward to. That is when we will be settled. And that is when we will be whole. That is when our bridegroom will come and bring us home to be with Him for all eternity. What a glorious and blessed day that is going to

be. May we thank Him and praise Him and hope for the blessings of abundance beyond compare. We receive a foretaste of it now, and even that is amazing. But what a glorious day it will be when He comes again.

May His grace and His mercy and His peace be and abide with you always, now and forevermore, until that day, unto life everlasting. Amen.