

**John 2:1-11**  
**"The Wedding Feast"**  
**Second Sunday after the Epiphany**

**January 20, 2019**  
**First Lutheran Church, Glencoe, Minn.**  
**Pastor Peter Adelsen**

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

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

***[Intro]***

Even the most devoted married couple will experience a stormy bout once in a while.

A grandmother, celebrating her golden wedding anniversary, once told the secret of her long and happy marriage.

She said: "On my wedding day, I decided to make a list of ten of my husband's faults which, for the sake of our marriage, I would overlook."

A guest asked the woman what some of the faults she overlooked.

The grandmother replied: "To tell you the truth, my dear, I never did get around to listing them. But whenever my husband did something that made me hopping mad, I would say to myself, '*Lucky for him that's one of the ten!*'"

Ah, marriage. Marriage isn't always as perfect as some television shows and movies portray, but marriage is a lifelong promise of one man and one woman to live faithfully with each other.

***[Wedding at Cana]***

Each marriage has a beginning. Yes, there is a first date. But, we mark the beginning of a marriage from the wedding date.

Our gospel text from John this morning tells us of one of those wedding dates.

***"On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples"*** (John 2:1-2).

Weddings in the First Century Jewish culture, were not all that different from today. The wedding officially united the couple and the feast that followed was certainly a party.

The only difference from then to now is the engagement. Engagements back in the First Century were similar to the wedding vows we have today. So, when the man asked his future wife to be married, he would do so in the presence of witnesses – much like today’s bridal party.

Then sometime thereafter, the groom came to take his bride to be an officially married couple. It was then that the party started. The wedding feast began, often lasting for many days.

This was the celebration at Cana.

The wedding feast was to celebrate God’s creation of marriage. They celebrated the lifelong union of the man and woman. They celebrated the hope of procreation and nurturing of future children. They celebrated the covenant, or promise, of living together faithfully until death.

This was a party. There was dancing. There was singing. And, there was wine.

Now, the one thing that was to never happen at the wedding feast was to run out of food and run out of wine.

*[No Wine]*

As the wedding feast was far from over, Mary whispered into the ear of Jesus: ***“They have no wine”*** (John 2:3).

Since Mary was aware of this blunder, it is likely that she had some management of the wedding feast. So, this is likely why she went directly to her son for advice.

The question arises however: What did Mary have in mind for Jesus to do?

Some scholars suggest that Mary expected no miracle at all, but was just turning to Him for advice. Others suggest that it is impossible to see how she could not expect anything less than a miracle.

After all, in the First Century there weren't any grocery stores or liquor stores to just make a quick purchase. You had to make the wine yourself – which could take up to four weeks to 12 months! The other option is hoping that a nearby friend – who is not at the wedding feast – has stored some wine away. So, this is turning into a disaster!

Believe me, people will talk if this wedding feast turns out to be a failure.

So, Jesus knowing the importance of weddings and the marriage to follow offers to help his mom out of this disaster.

***“Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons”*** (John 2:6).

So, Jesus said to the servants: ***“Fill the jars with water.”*** So, they filled them up to the brim. Then Jesus told them, ***“Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast”*** (John 2:7,8). And, so they did.

Immediately, when the master of the feast tasted the water now wine, he called over the groom and said to him: ***“Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now”*** (John 2:10).

Now, we do not know at what point the water became wine, but to these servants it was evident beyond a doubt that Jesus changed the water into wine.

Instead of a wedding feast disaster, Jesus displayed the first of His signs that He is in fact God in the flesh and manifested His glory. His miracle then confirmed and strengthened the faith of His disciples.

### ***[Cohabitation and Marriage]***

God loves marriage. God honors and praises marriage. God sanctifies marriage as holy. In fact, Christ calls marriage a divine union when He says, ***“What God has joined together, let not man separate”*** (Matthew 19:6, *Apology of the Augsburg Confession* 252.29).

You see, the wedding feast became a symbol of the union between God and Israel, which would result from God's steadfast love for Israel.

For the rabbis, the giving of the Law on Sinai was the time of God's marriage with Israel, and the Torah was the marriage contract between God and His people.

Marriage is to be a lifelong commitment, like that of God's eternal covenant.

However, today's interpretation of marriage has changed. Today's prevailing sinful culture does not see marriage as a life-long covenant between one man and one woman.

Instead, marriage is often seen as just an option. Marriage is often seen as a mere contract that can be ended for any reason.

Oftentimes, the sinful culture expresses that living together outside of marriage is the norm. This cohabitation is positively portrayed in television shows and movies.

But, is this true commitment? Many here this morning may not see any problem with cohabitation. You may think that cohabitation doesn't hurt anyone. The culture has led many to believe that it is good to cohabit before marriage to find out if the couple is truly compatible.

Then there are some cohabitating couples who fear commitment. They believe that by not being married their heart would never be broken, but if one would die, the other would certainly experience heartache.

So, does this cohabitation before marriage work? Well, the *Journal of Marriage and Family* published a new study last September that said: "Couples who lived together before marriage had a lower divorce rate in their first year of marriage, but had a higher divorce rate after five years."<sup>1</sup>

This statistic is partly because newly married couples, who first moved in together after their wedding, struggle through their first year of marriage as they get to know each other's quirks. But it is financial trouble that often leads to divorce, rather than infidelity.

Ultimately, cohabitation is not commitment. In this situation, either party could leave at any moment for any reason at all – without any consequences. Each person is always fearful of this possibility. Each person is always walking on eggshells as to not offend the other.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.theatlantic.com/family/archive/2018/10/premarital-cohabitation-divorce/573817/>

In marriage, we will offend each other, but there is the life-long public commitment between each other and God of faithfulness for which we remember that we are to forgive each other as God the Father has forgiven us through His Son Jesus Christ.

So if you are a cohabitating couple or know of one, also know that God is always there to forgive your sin, or the sin of another, because Christ died and rose in order to forgive all sins. Now, all God requires is our repentance and we are forgiven, because God is always faithful in His covenant vow to His people.

And, for those who are single – I don't want to leave you out this morning – remember that your identity, your worth, or your completeness is not determined by marital status, but by the Triune God alone.

### ***[Made New]***

The wedding feast at Cana also reminds us of another wedding feast to come. We are reminded that after Mary whispered to Jesus, ***“They have no wine,”*** Jesus responds saying, ***“My hour has not yet come.”*** (John 2:3, 4)

What could Jesus be referring to?

Well, on the night He was betrayed, Jesus said that the wine at the Last Supper is His true blood. Matthew records this event this way:

***“And Jesus took a cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to [His disciples], saying, ‘Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins’”***  
(Matthew 26:27-28).

Like the perfect wine He created from water at Cana, the wine in the Lord's Supper is the blood He shed for our sins upon the cross. Here in the Lord's Supper, we receive a foretaste of the wedding feast in heaven!

Like the servants unsure of when the water turned to wine at Cana, we too, do not know when the wine in the Lord's Supper turns to blood.

But, by faith, we know we taste Christ's true body and true blood at this altar. When we receive Christ's body and blood, we know that we are forgiven of our sins and our faith is strengthened. We, too, become like Christ's disciples at Cana.

But, like Christ's disciples, our worldly insights do hinder us. They believed that Jesus was the Christ. Then they doubted. But, in the end, they believed. They believed because they saw Jesus, who once was dead, now alive. They believed and shared this good news with the entire world. They shared this good news in preaching, teaching and being divinely inspired to write the New Testament.

Likewise, Christ changes us from mere water into perfect wine – through the waters of Baptism, through receiving Christ's body and blood at this altar, through hearing and taking to heart God's Word, and through confessing our sins.

We were once just plain water – but by grace through faith – we are now sweet wine.

We pass from death to life. We are forgiven. We are made new.

Amen.

The peace of God which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

✠ SOLI DEO GLORIA ✠