

EPIPHANY 2

January 14 2018

Exodus 33:12-23
Ephesians 5:22-33
John 2:1-11

Standing...

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

In our Old Testament lesson,
Moses wanted to see God's glory,
and God obliges,
revealing as much glory as Moses could stand.

In our Gospel lesson,
Christ reveals a little bit of His glory as well—just a ray of it,
to His mother and five disciples.
Just like Moses, they would never forget it.

Let us pray. These are Your words Holy Father. Sanctify us in the truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Sitting...

As you may recall from last week, Epiphany arrived with a small point of light—
what the bible calls a star,
leading those strange characters known as Magi to Jerusalem,
and ultimately Bethlehem.

Well, in our Gospel lesson today Jesus is “Epiphanied” again.
But this time He's all grown up.

Now look, you all know this story.
Not only do you hear it every year,
but you hear it at every Lutheran wedding.

Sure—empty changes into full,
washing water changes into wedding wine,
worry changes into relief,
and worst changes into best.
But is that all there is?
Folks, there is so much here
I won't come close to pulling it all out.

Jesus has just shown up—five of His disciples in tow,

at the very festive occasion of a wedding.
Because...Jesus rejoices with those who rejoice.

Everyone has gathered at the father of the groom's house.
Typically, something like this...would last days on end—
but not now—not without any wine.
Was the lack due to poor planning? Maybe...
Did someone spill a bunch of it? Maybe...
Or, was it because more people showed up than expected?
...including Jesus...and five of His disciples?
Sounds plausible, but the text doesn't tell us.
All we know is this is a desperate situation,
and Mary, in somewhat of a panic, relays it to Jesus.

To our ears their interchange seems awkward—brusque even,
calling His mother, “Woman” just before saying,
“What has this concern of yours to do with Me?”
Or literally, “What to you and to me?”
But let's keep these two things in mind:
Jesus never broke the fourth commandment,
nor is Mary put off in the slightest.

I could give you examples,
but calling a female, “Woman” was Jesus' normal way of addressing women.¹

And, as a matter of fact, the next time Jesus calls Mary, “Woman”² is here—
while He's being crucified.
Mary does not appear again until she's located under the cross,
where Jesus commits her unto John saying, “Woman, behold your son.”

Now speaking of being crucified, at the wedding, Jesus tells His mother,
“My hour has not yet come.” Sounds cryptic, but,
“His hour” is His death—when He is delivered into the hands of sinners.
It's the thing for which He came to do;
to bleed and die for the sins of the world.
And though it seems out of place,
Jesus' death is clearly on His mind.

Yet from these words,
Mary believes Jesus will intervene. She trusts Him.
She doesn't know what He's going to do,
but she knows He's going to do something wonderful,
leaving it entirely up to Him.
Her last recorded words are—

¹ Mt. 15:28, Lk 13:12, Jn 4:21, 8:10, 20:13

² Jn. 19.25-27

“Do whatever He tells you.”

What a very simple, yet profound message of faith and life and salvation.
Hers are perfect words for us—us sinners who prefer to do just the opposite
of what He tells us to do. For instance,

Jesus says, “Repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins.”

Do whatever He tells you.

Jesus says, ““This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.”

Do whatever He tells you.

Jesus says, “Take eat, take drink, this is My body and blood, for your
forgiveness.”

Do whatever He tells you.

Jesus says, “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”

Do whatever He tells you.

Jesus says, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another...”

Do whatever He tells you.

There’s more, but you get the point.

Let Mary’s statement echo in your ears, and throughout our church.

Well, the servants hear Jesus say,

“Fill”—and they fill. A well or spring must have been close by,
because they fill six large stone pots—used for the Jewish rite of purification.

This practice stretched back to the book of Leviticus,
and was expanded during the post-Babylonian period.

The text is very clear about the number of pots—6

and how much water each pot could hold—many gallons.

Moreover, after filling them there was nothing left to add,
(as if one could add something to water to make it wine.)

The second command—

The servants were to draw some of it out and take it to the master of the feast—
the *triclinarch*.

My guess is, he examines the color,

smells the bouquet,

tastes all sides and spits—and as that great theologian Gomer Pyle would say,
“Surprise, Surprise, Surprise!”

Water to wine! When did this happen?

When the servants filled the vessels?

When the servants made their way to the master of the feast?

We have no idea! All we know is, with Jesus, it’s done.

The normal time involved from the picking of the grape
to the finished product of wine has been completely collapsed.

And my guess is, when this discovery is made,

Jesus is already back with the others at the party.

And like so many of Jesus’ other signs—

only a few actually know about it.

The master of the feast is beside himself. Startled even.
He immediately calls the bridegroom over,
lecturing him on the etiquette of throwing a party.

“You don’t serve a vintage wine like this after taste buds are dulled by cheaper wine.
They won’t appreciate it. You have kept the best until now!”
And if that doesn’t describe what God has done for each of you, beloved...
I don’t know what does.

Jesus is the Second Adam—the best.
The angel told Mary that He would be great³—
and He is, for it is He who has come for you,
to bleed,
to die,
to suffer your punishment on the cross—
so that you can be pardoned,
and have peace with God.

St. John records this as being the first of His signs—and I’ve got to say,
if this is Jesus’ idea of a sign, I can hardly wait to see His Heaven!
I mean, I’m ready to go *now*!
I *like* this Jesus.

With Him there's 12 baskets, full of leftovers, after thousands have been fed.
With Him there’s extra manna and quail lying on the floor of the wilderness.
And with Him David prays, “My cup overflows.”
That's how it is with our Jesus...
when He comes giving life, it's full life, eternal life.
And when He comes giving the forgiveness of your sins,
it's all of them.

So this was the first of His signs which manifested—“Epiphanied”—His glory.
And why did He do it?
The text reads, “His disciples believed in Him.”

John tells us there are seven signs.
First, water to wine.
Second, the healing of the royal official’s son.
Third, the healing of the paralytic at Bethsaida.
Fourth, the feeding of the 5000.
Fifth, Jesus walking on water.
Sixth, Jesus healing of the man born blind.

³ Lk 1:32

Seventh, Jesus raising of Lazarus.

Seven signs. John ends of His gospel account saying this:

³⁰Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.⁴

Even though Jesus will no doubt make use of wine again—
doing yet again something wonderful,
the ultimate change at Cana's feast is sinners—like you—becoming believers,
enemies of God—like you—becoming sons and daughters of the King.

In the Holy Name of Jesus, Amen.

Standing...

And now may the peace of God which passes all understanding, guard your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Offertory...

⁴ John 20:30-31