

Epiphany 3, 2018

Lessons from a Wedding

St. John 2: 1-11

St. Andrew's – Jacksonville, OR

By Fr. Bill Baker

Perhaps the most common concern amongst Christians is why, if the God of the universe is a God of love, does he not enhance the lives of believers with perpetual goodness. If we profess our faith in all honesty and in all truth shouldn't our belief be our ticket out of here and into our eternal homes in the blink of an eye? For many, the mere fact that the rain falls on all of us, in an indiscriminate manner, precludes them from believing there is an all-loving God. Ignorance is bliss I've heard...but, it can also be dangerous.

And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage. And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come.

So, let me set the stage. Jesus is only the prominent figure here because when WE read scripture we are reading to learn more about the One we worship. But here, at this event, Jesus is a Jew invited to a gentile wedding along with His disciples who number only two at this time (Andrew and Phillip). The ministry of Jesus is just beginning and He is not yet known by the masses. At this gathering the bride and groom would be the main characters on the scene as well as the Master of Ceremonies who is ensuring all goes well. **But**, all does not go well does it? As we enter the narrative our insight tells us that the wedding is well under way and has reached a point where there is a shortage of wine...god forbid! What a dire situation! Outrage! Where's the MC? **Mary**, catching wind of this dilemma, knows of a solution. You can almost hear her thoughts, "I'll let my son know of the situation and he will provide a miracle. It's time everyone learned the truth of who He is...son, they have no wine!" Aren't we all like that when it comes to our kids? We want the world to know how smart, how talented and how caring they are and sometimes we embarrass them by pushing them to

the front for the satisfaction of our own pride. Mary knows Jesus intimately and she must be bursting at the seams to see His day come; although, I am not convinced that even she knows what that means.

But the response Jesus gives seems abrupt...as though Jesus is putting Mary in her place. *“Woman, what have you to do with me? My hour is not yet come.”* Is Jesus scolding his mother? Has Mary overstepped her authority? After all she is speaking to God. Maybe with His verbiage, Jesus is reminding Mary that He is in control of His divine plan. Has Mary herself forgotten for a moment that Jesus became incarnate in her virgin womb to overcome sin for our redemption, that He is her creator also? Is Jesus being demoted, in a sense, to magic tricks? Or does God need reminding that he has the power to do all things? Jesus’s rebuke reminds us that we cannot push God to act before the appropriate time. God is not at our beckon call to provide for our desires or even what we perceive to be our needs. His hour had not yet come and he would not step into the limelight and make His divine proclamation before all was properly in place...He still needs time to open the eyes of those who would see.

But, in respect for His mother’s intervention, Jesus allows for a spark of His divinity to benefit the few who stand by...and Jesus’s first recorded miracle is witnessed. We are not told, in scripture, why Jesus submitted to His mother’s wishes. Maybe he did it in adherence to the fifth commandment to ‘honor thy father and thy mother’ (we all know the importance of doing what mom says). Whatever His reasons, by chapter 7 of John’s gospel we see talk once again of this ‘hour’. *“Then cried Jesus in the temple as he taught, saying, Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am: and I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true, whom ye know not. But I know him: for I am from him, and he hath sent me.* (Jesus is saying that “you know me in the flesh, but you do not know me in the spirit. I am a man, yes, but so much more than you have imagined”). *Then they sought to take him: but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come. And many of the people believed on him, and said, When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?* (John 7: 28-31) Seems crazy to us doesn’t it? Christ stands in their midst and they see only the man. Their blindness illustrates further the need of Christ to wait upon the appropriate time for His hour to come. And come it will...

The plan of man's redemption did not begin with the Incarnation. There has been a steady redemptive process accelerating to our current day by which the Almighty has entered the very hearts of mankind. In earlier covenants mankind was placed under the law and found that the pursuit for righteousness only led to death and damnation. When the Nile was turned red with blood, it was the blood of man's condemnation. **But** God is patient. In the New Covenant, God, in the flesh of Jesus Christ, turned water not into the blood of death but into wine that will become for us the blood of life. This act of turning water into wine will soon become emblematic of the Last Supper where the wine that is given will become His salvific blood. (Praise be to God and His enduring patience).

The miracle at this gentile wedding was a miracle of His divine nature, a taste of things to come, an ember that will soon set the world on fire but, not before His hour had come. And what is this 'hour' that Jesus is referring to?...it is the sacrifice of His humanity upon a cross; with nails in His hands, and in His feet and a crown of thorns upon His brow. Man's eternal death in sin could only be redeemed by the undefiled humanity of God Himself in the flesh of Jesus Christ. And so his hour came and we are the beneficiaries.

And now we must ask ourselves, how has His Hour impacted our lives? This miracle of wine at local wedding illustrates for us the understanding that we, like the water jars, will find ourselves at times emptied in spirit and in need of replenishment. **Jesus** wants us to realize our need for His salvific love before He will provide the fulfillment of our redemption. It is in these times of privation where we find ourselves coming to God in prayer that He may fill us to the brim with His loving spirit. **The** rain does fall on us all without discrimination because we all need to be reminded that it is God only who can fill the void. The jars can only be filled after the need arises or the miracle is of none effect. Let me read to you the words of St. Chrysostom who says it much better than I, *"For he that knows his own need, when his prayer is answered, is very grateful; but he that has not adverted to his need, will have no clear sense of a favour received."* And once filled to the brim, we too become part of the process of bringing others to Christ that they too can receive the life giving blood of His redemption found at His final hour when he made the final proclamation, *"It is finished."*

In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.