

Sermon: Miracle on 2025th Street Psalm 36: 5-10 John 2: 1-11

The interesting thing about John's Gospel in general; and Jesus' first miracle in particular; is that there are always two ways of seeing things. There is the simple surface story; the words we read on the page; and then there is the wealth of deeper meaning and significance of what is really going on. It's important for us to look at both to gain a better understanding of how we might marry the two. On the surface of it, Jesus and His disciples were invited to a wedding. No big deal, right? But in Jesus' day, the whole wedding celebration could last for many days. What this tells us is something we may not think much about. Jesus had a social life, and had many friends; the closest of whom became His disciples. He, and they, would have been perfectly at home at this joyous celebration. Nowhere does it say that Jesus thought it was a crime to be happy. Quite the contrary. A little later in John's Gospel, Jesus says, "I have told you that 'As the father has loved me, so have I loved you' so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete". What we see in our Bibles; the words we read on the page; seems to be more about the work and ministry of Jesus and not so much about the joy-filled times spent with His friends. We know, for example, that Mary, Martha, and Lazarus were good friends of Jesus. For Jesus and His closest friends; the disciples; to have been invited to this wedding must have meant that they had many more friends and it was important for them to be part of the social fabric of their community. It's not just that people had heard of Jesus; they actually knew Jesus. And what I take away from this is the importance of the lives we live outside our work. An example of this came in a phone conversation I had with a friend the other day. She is nearing retirement, and it frightens her because she hasn't cultivated the social part of her life. She's been busy supporting a marriage, maintaining a house, raising kids, and working a fulltime job (even shiftwork). She hasn't done much volunteering and doesn't really have any hobbies. Her point was this. Without cultivating friendships, the very idea of retirement frightens her. So, here we have Jesus attending a wedding; cultivating His many friendships. And maybe that's the reminder we need; to be more intentional about reaching out to someone we haven't seen or talked to for awhile.

Another thing we don't read much about in our Bibles is the importance of Jesus' family life. Jesus' miracle at Cana of Galilee shows how important family and home were to Jesus. It was in a humble home where Jesus performed this first miracle.

To him, home was a place for which nothing but His best was good enough. We read about His mother, brothers, and sisters, but we don't read much about His earthly father, Joseph. It is most likely that by the time of this wedding, Joseph had passed away. This may be the reason why Jesus spent so many years in Nazareth. He had to support His mother and family. It was only when His younger brothers and sisters were able to look after themselves that He was able to leave home. Jesus was with His family, and taking care of them, until He was 30 years old. I am extremely lucky to have a good relationship with my four brothers and brother-in-law; my only sister having passed away some years ago. I have many wonderful memories of my sister, and one is that she stressed the importance of we siblings staying regularly connected – and we do. We call each other on a regular basis, and get together as often as we can; at least a couple of times a year. (And that's not always easy as we live in Lucknow, Sarnia, Brockville, Huntsville, Halifax NS, and Wetaskiwin AB). I know our mom, dad, and sister are pleased with our efforts. Jesus' mother was at this wedding with Him. Mary knew who Jesus was and that He could take care of the situation of the wine running out. In fact, it was Mary who said to the servants, "Do whatever he (that is, her son) tells you". Problem solved. The servants did exactly what Jesus told them to do, and sometimes we need to do things exactly as Jesus tells us to do, even if they make no sense to us at the time. Jesus does miraculous things through us when we are obedient to Him. And we can expect miracles in the year ahead. (reference to 2025th Street). I know this may seem presumptuous, but think of it this way. In the story, the master of the banquet would have panicked had he known of the wine shortage. When he tasted the replenished wine, he couldn't believe its complexity and opulent fruity aroma. Everyone knew that you offered the best wine first because after a while; when senses were dull; the quality really didn't matter. The servants, Mary, and the disciples knew what had happened. Jesus saved the best for last. We see many changes in our lives too; some good, some not so good; and when Jesus facilitates the change, He has saved the best for last. That's the miracle. And God performs miracles all the time, however, we don't recognize them when we don't expect them. God created this world by speaking it into existence. There is nothing too big for God and God's family.

It was to save a humble Galilean family from embarrassment and shame that Jesus performed this first miracle. It was in sympathy, in kindness and in understanding

for everyday people, that Jesus acted. Just about anyone can do the big thing on the big occasion, but Jesus, the Lord of all life, and the King of glory, ushered in the kingdom of God by simply saving a Galilean couple from public humiliation. It is just by such deeds of understanding and simple kindness that we too can show how we follow Jesus Christ. Now we can see what John is teaching us. Every story tells us; not of something Jesus did once and never again; but of something which He is forever doing. John tells us; not of things that Jesus once did in Palestine; but of things that He still does today. And what John wants us to see here is not that Jesus; once on a certain day; turned some pots of water into wine. He wants us to see that whenever Jesus comes into a person's life, there comes with Him a new quality of living. Without Jesus, life can be dull and flat. With Jesus, life becomes vivid, vital, sparkling, and exciting. Without Jesus, life can be drab and unimaginative. With Him, it is thrilling and exhilarating.

There is a fairly well-known story about Sir Wilfrid Grenfell, who was a British medical missionary to Newfoundland. When he was appealing for volunteers for his work along the Labrador coast, Grenfell said that he could not promise them much money, but he could promise them the time of their lives. That is what Jesus promises us. Remember that John's was the 4th of four Gospels, written after Christ's crucifixion; which means John had plenty of time to reflect, meditate, and recall the meanings and significances that he had not recognized at the time that Jesus yet lived. When John recounted this story, he was remembering what life with Jesus was really like; and he said, *Wherever Jesus went and whenever he came into a life, it was like water turning into wine.* This story is John saying to us, *If you want this new exhilaration, follow Jesus, and positive change in your life will come.* So, where does this leave us today? We must put our faith in Jesus. I want to return to the recent phone conversation I had with my friend. She had a visit from a deceased friend in a dream, who told her he had messed-up and was paying for his sins. She thought he meant that he had been a bad person and had done many bad things, but she told me he was a good and generous guy, so his words didn't make sense to her. Then she told me he was a devout atheist. In saying those words, she now knew what he meant. I assured her that Jesus stands with us before the judgement seat of God, and I urged her to pray to Jesus to come alongside her deceased friend to assure him of Christ's mercy and peace. Faith in Jesus can come when; and sometimes especially when; we think its already too late. Ours is a God of second chances.

The disciples who were with Jesus already believed in who He was. Over the next three years, their faith became stronger. They began to realize that not only was nothing impossible for Jesus, but nothing was impossible for them then and nothing is impossible for us today, both as individual believers and together as the Body of Christ. Jesus ushered in the kingdom of God by performing the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory. The work that Jesus and His disciples began in their community then is the work we continue in our community today. The kingdom of God is at hand, for you, for me, and for all who are yet to believe. And that's the miracle. To God be the glory, now and forever. Amen.