

January 20, 2013

Scripture Lessons

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

John 2:1-11

Sermon A Near-Dry Wedding

When I started pastoring in Anvil, Pennsylvania, probably more than twenty years ago, and the nearby town of Cleona was what was called a dry town, that is no one was allowed to have a license to sell or serve alcohol in Cleona. The Cleona fire company however had the bright idea that they could make a lot of money selling drinks at their events, if they could convince the town to become a wet town. So they went through the process of getting a measure put on the ballot to change the law so the town would go through to go from dry to wet. Little did anyone realize what a stir that it would cause but especially with the WCCTU- Women Christian Temperance Union I don't know if you have heard of that group or not but it was founded in the 19th century to regulate the use of alcohol especially so for a good cause so women would not be victims of alcohol related domestic violence and so they would not be led into economic ruin. And if I am not mistaken they were even a driving force behind the prohibition movement in the early twenty century. Whoever would have thought in 1983 in Cleona, Pennsylvania there would be an influence of a thought to be debunking organization from the 19th century? But the WCCTU rallied their troops to make sure that Cleona's ballot measure failed miserably. In fact as far as I know Cleona is still a dry town even into this day.

Well, weddings in Palestine in Jesus' time were not generally dry affairs at all. Wine was a staple and in fact a safe drink in Jesus day and the wedding feasting of that time was generally known for its several days of eating and drinking the groom not the bride family's expense, So those of you who have daughters would enjoy that that things were reversed and the groom's family had to pay. So what in the world is the significance of John's Gospel featuring of the story of the near dry wedding of Cana of Galilee, as Jesus very first miracle? I suppose I could say it is a lesson to all of you teetotalers out there that even Jesus sanctioned the drinking of wine but I don't think I am going there this morning. I could emphasize the fact that there is an Eucharistic sort of Holy Communion ending to the story- the idea that in the Holy Communion the common objects like bread and wine becomes for us a kind of spiritual food as did this water turned to wine in the story but I'm not going to do that today. I could even take a look at Jesus rather complicated interchange with his mother in the story and the whole idea of whether he was truly ready to reveal himself fully to the larger world at this

wedding feast but I think I will do that another time. So let's go home. No today I do have a point. Today I want to focus on a couple other aspects of this first miracle in John's Gospel, the first miracle that Jesus ever did of the miracles of his ministry that took place after his baptism and his temptation in the wilderness

I guess the first thing I would point out to we sometimes strictly Protestants is just that. That of all the really important feelings, and teachings and raising from the dead and casting out of demons and miracles that Jesus performed, the very first miracle John choose in his Gospel one that we might consider rather frivolous and rather unimportant as wine running out at a wedding party. I wonder what that has to say to us about our faith. Well, but first of all I think it is about a number of things about who Jesus was and the kind of Christians Jesus wants each one of us to be .What more joyful event could Jesus have been a part of than a wedding as I was speaking with the children. And what greater evidence of the fact that Jesus instead of being a sad sack kill joy but must have been the kind of person, a joyful affirming person that people would even invite to a wedding celebration. I think we are called to be the same kind of people; we are called to be joyful; we are called to be loving; we are called to be affirming; we are called to be hopeful the kind of Christian that others would want to be around; a kind of person that others would be drawn to in faith when they are having questions or problems or struggles in their life of faith

And secondly the problem that Jesus helped to remedy may not have been as frivolous we might suppose either. As the groom's family was responsible for the feast and the wine gave out- what a social disaster that would have been; what a losing of face and what a shapely event to happen in a joyful occasion in the life of that couple That again speaks to the kind of person Jesus was and the kind of person that Jesus calls each one of us to be- helpful people; caring people; attentive people about the details of life; people who are willing to go out on a limb to maintain the joy of the feast important occasion and to help our fellow human beings in the world around us . Not frivolous but extravagantly generous with our time, our energy, our reputation as opposed to those who would criticize Jesus Who were dour or sour puss unwilling to share even a glass of their wine let alone their full reputation in order to create a great atmosphere for this wedding feast

And what about the nature of the miracle of itself I think the nature of the miracle is the icing on the cake in the story. The statement made about the wine by steward of the feast, I think, reminds us of the quality of the miracle that Jesus performed here and the quality of our spiritual life can take on when joy, hope and forgiveness are the spiritual fruit we bare on our journey of faith. I heard you guys chuckling because when presented with of the sample of water turned to wine before the serving of the guests. The steward remarks in this way, everyone serves the good wine first and then the inferior afterwards after the guests have become

drunk but you have kept the good wine until right now. It is a funny statement but it is a truth statement and it is also a reflection of the kind of life that we are to lead in Jesus and the kind of life that God wants for us on our journey of faith each day. What God wants for us and those around us quality. God wants us and those around us the best. God offers us the best in Jesus Christ and we in return are called upon to offer our best. We are called upon to offer our generosity. We are called upon to offer our joy, our mercy, our kindness, our hope, and most of all our love to one another. This I think above all is what Jesus wants us to think about this year along this life. And together we say AMEN