

## **Second Sunday after Epiphany January 10, 2019**

### **John 2:1-11**

I've been hooked on Mike Holmes again. Do any of you remember him? He's the Canadian contractor in the overalls he got really big in 2001 with his Holmes on Homes series on HGTV. The premise of the series was Mike Holmes going in and fixing homes that had been renovated by contractors who did shoddy work. His next series was Holmes Inspection. Here he went into homes people had bought because they looked great and another home inspector had said things were okay, but when they move in they find out there are issues.

A common theme in the series is Mike looking beyond the bling and showiness of the finishes and considering whether the foundation, the stuff in the walls, is done properly. Or if there are dangerous things lying in wait there; open connections, mold, asbestos, rotten wood, poor construction.

The show highlights one of our human tendencies, to look at the obvious. The flash and polish. The great finishes. To pay attention to the loud or the showy. All while we ignore the day to day, the mundane, the quiet, the things behind the wall, the people behind the scenes.

Some of that dynamic is at work in our text today. This is the first of the seven "signs" found in John's gospel. These are the events that are the indicators, the banners, by which God and who God is, is revealed to the world through Jesus. The end of the text tells us that this sign at the Wedding in Cana "revealed Jesus' glory".

Now, when we think of the Glory of God in scripture we often think of the power that made Moses' face glow, the bright shining that he couldn't bear to look at. Glory is something so spectacular, so visible, so brilliant you can't miss it. God's glory is in your face.

But, look at the sign in our text, in which the glory of Jesus is revealed, and you might begin to wonder at this definition. Because this sign at Cana has more in common with what is going on behind the walls than it does with all those spectacular finishes. The miracle itself, of turning water into wine, is mentioned only in passing. "Jesus said to them, 'Fill the jars with water.' And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, 'Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.' So they took it. When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from... the steward called the bridegroom and said to him, 'Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now'." " Wait, what? The fact the water had become wine is a throwaway line. All the steward knows is that he's just tasted some excellent wine. The Bridegroom seems to have been oblivious to how close he came to the disaster of running out of wine and doesn't even seem to react to what the steward is telling him.

And it would have been a disaster to run out, much more than just a social faux pas. In those days, the wedding feast went on for about a week and the bridegroom and his family were expected to provide food and drink for this group. To have failed in that task would have brought shame on the family. In a culture where honor and shame were prevalent, this would have been devastating to their social standing and perhaps affected their prospects in all

avenues of their life for years if not generations to come. And the bridegroom seems clueless about this.

In fact, for this sign, there are only a few people who do have a clue what really happened; Jesus, his mama (maybe), and the servants who did the work of getting the water.

So, except for those few, what has happened is probably accounted for as something fortuitous, at best mysterious. I mean, what did the bridegroom think about what he had been told? Most folks give out the better wine and then serve the inferior stuff when everyone is drunk. But you, the steward says, you serve the best stuff last. Did he just nod his head and go, "Yeah... yeah I did?" Did he wonder about this, or did he just write it off as some fortuitous event and go back to partying?

If this is what reveals the glory of God, this miracle mentioned in passing, what does it tell us? I think it tells us that the glory of God in Jesus is at work in the normal, in the everyday, in the unflashy, unsexy stuff that passes most people's notice. It's in the care taken in studding walls and wiring things properly. The glory of God is in the homeless who are housed from the cold for a night. In the hungry child who has a meal to eat at school. It's in those who mourn who receive a word of comfort. It's in the please or thank you that can make someone's day.

The glory of God is found in all those things that are done for others, not because they have to, but because they want to. Jesus didn't have to do this miracle (unless you read between the lines and assume Mary told him so he would do something). He chose to do it. Quietly, through the normal means. And perhaps

the Glory of God is in things that are done without sounding the horn, without publicity or pomp, but quietly, consistently. In the background, so even those who benefit might not know how close they came to disaster.

But the servants, those who did the hard work for Jesus, knew. It was hard work. Those things held a total of 180 gallons of water. If they were mostly empty when Jesus told them to fill it, then they could be moving upwards of 120 gallons. And depending on the water source it could be bringing that from miles away. Now, I don't know about you, but I'll whine when I have to bring a gallon of milk in from the garage, much less 120 gallons from a mile away!

The servants are privileged to be part of the act and to see the truth of things. To see that it wasn't fortuitous planning on the part of the bridegroom or pure happenstance, it was by a gift from God that they have avoided disaster. It was from the generosity of God, made possible through their laboring at the command of Jesus, that the bridegroom and his family received what they needed for the day.

It strikes me, that as followers of Christ, this describes us. Those who are given the privilege and responsibility to labor at the command of Christ, to do the hard but simple work of filling the jars, of sharing our food and our wealth, of speaking a kind word, of performing anonymous random acts of kindness, of doing our own work in our jobs and vocations well.

This story also makes me wonder about where we miss God's glory. We are the servants of Jesus, but we are prone to those same human tendencies. We spend so much time looking at the spectacular and miss the glory of God in the little

things, in the gifts we have been given... a warm home, clothes on our back, enough to eat for the day.

What would it be like to pay attention to those things this week? To look at the servants around us...the folks who bring us the fast food, bag our groceries and see in them, God's glory. To see what may seem like happenstance or fortuitous planning this week as a gift from God, a sign of God's glory.

What would it be like, to consider that the labor we do at the command of Jesus , as unspectacular as it seems, might be the means by which God saves someone...even if they don't recognize it? What would it be like this week to look for what others do not... the way God has worked in their life to save it. Perhaps even to consider doing something the servants did not... and speak up.

To say, "You know, I don't know how that became wine, but I know the source of where it came from. Let me tell you about what I know of Jesus."

We are reminded, each week, that Jesus works through ordinary, everyday things. For he comes to us in the bread and the wine. May this remind us this week, every week, to go into the world, led by Jesus, to see and proclaim the glory of God in the ordinary, everyday things.