

January 16, 2022
Second Sunday after the Epiphany
St. Timothy Lutheran Church – Huber Heights, OH
Pastor Joel Sutton

John 2:1-11

THE SIGNS POINT TO OUR SAVIOR.

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Our text for meditation today comes from the Gospel according to St John, the 2nd chapter, which you heard read earlier.

One popular point that is often drawn out of Jesus' miracle at the wedding at Cana is that by attending the wedding, Jesus is affirming God's institution of marriage. It's one thing to be *invited* to a wedding but it's quite another to *show up* and *celebrate*. When you attend a wedding, you are saying "*amen*" to the union. You are publicly giving your approval and blessing to the couple. By His presence at the wedding at Cana Jesus is extolling the virtue of God's holy estate of marriage.

Another point in the text is Jesus' power and authority to change over 120 gallons of water into the best wine. But perhaps more important than the miracle itself is the fact that the miracle was a *sign*. St John records:

"¹¹ Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him." (John 2:11)

Miracles capture your attention because a phenomenon has taken place. But a *sign*, on the other hand, is quite different. A *sign* draws attention, but not to itself. A *sign* gives information, pointing towards something else. If you're driving to see the Grand Canyon and see a *sign* that says "*Grand Canyon fifty miles ahead,*" you don't stop and take pictures of the *sign*. No, you go to where the *sign* leads.

In St John's Gospel, John describes Jesus' miraculous works as *signs*. He uses the word *sign* seventeen different times to illustrate that Jesus' mighty works reveal that He is the Messiah and Savior of the world. While a miracle stirs up awe and wonder, a God-given *sign* confronts man with God's presence in such a way as to demand faith and obedience. This *sign* at the wedding at Cana was the first of many *signs* in which Jesus would manifest His glory, revealing who He is and why He has come. He is God in the flesh of man, dwelling among His people to save them from their sins. To ensure you don't miss the purpose of the many *signs* in John's Gospel, before concluding his narrative, John writes:

"Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but 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.” (John 20:30-31)

By the power of the Holy Spirit working through the Word, hearts are changed, and faith is created. You and I then, in turn, rejoice and praise God that His Son has revealed His glory – and in response – we give Him all glory in our praise, in our good works, and in our deeds.

Even in the Old Testament, ***signs*** point to something. In ancient prophecy wine pointed to the fruitfulness and blessing of the coming Messiah and His kingdom. According to the Lord’s covenant with Israel, wine was a ***sign*** of God’s love to all who trusted in Him alone for salvation. Wine was a ***sign*** of the blessedness of God’s covenantal love and the lack of wine was associated with His divine judgment. (cf: Deuteronomy 7:13, 28:51) Through His prophet Isaiah the Lord promised to:

“... make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines...”
(Isaiah 25:6)

... for all who trusted in Him. But for those who turned away from the Lord and didn’t live within His covenant, the He said:

“You shall plant vineyards and dress them, but you shall neither drink the wine nor gather the grapes, for the worm shall eat them.” (Deuteronomy 28:39)

Perhaps this is why the mother of Jesus was so concerned when they ran out of wine at the wedding at Cana. Scripture doesn’t really say. What it does say is that the woman who had treasured in her heart all the things that had been told her regarding Jesus since His birth trusted Him to do something about the situation. She said to the servants:

“Do whatever he tells you.” (John 2:5)

Nearby there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification. (cf: John 2:6) These stone jars are also signs. They point to the old covenant, the Jewish ceremonial Law and how the unclean sinner was to approach God. The only way to approach God was on His terms, following the religious washing given in the Levitical Law. This was God’s provision for His people to become morally clean in His sight.

The jars point to the people’s sin – and they point to your sin and mine. Sins that need to be scrubbed away if you are to come before our holy God. Your sin of greed and covetousness, your gossiping and lying tongue, your hateful heart, lustful eyes, and knees which bow down to worldly idols.

The jars in our text are empty, perhaps declaring just how empty the old covenant is without a Messiah.

“⁷ Jesus said to [the servants], ‘Fill the jars with water.’ And they filled them up to the brim.” (John 2:7)

In his commentary on this text William Weinrich says:

“Jesus performs an act of replacement and fulfillment. The stone jars are filled ‘to the very top’ (Jn 2:7), that is, the time for the purification of the Jews is complete, and there is nothing more to be added to it.” “... the transition from

water to wine [is] the transition of OT type and shadow to the reality and clarity of the NT.” (John 1:1–7:1, Concordia Commentary, 318)

The Good News for you and me and all mankind is that Jesus has replaced the old purification system with the new. What was once used for ritual washing is now turned into the new wine of the Kingdom of God. It’s a replacement and fulfillment. The trust and faith in the old Levitical Laws has been brought to an end – and – the new faith and trust in Christ Jesus has begun. In His perfect life He has fulfilled the old covenant of the Law and in His death has ushered in the new covenant of His precious blood.

Jesus’ words to His mother is also a *sign*. When She told Him there was no more wine:

“Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.’” (John 2:4)

Jesus calls His mother by the term “*woman*.” But this is not disrespect. Even though John refers to this *woman* as the mother of Jesus three times in our text, (cf: John 2:1, 3, 5) the term *woman* suggests that they are no relation at all – and – it affirms the close relationship Jesus has with His Father. He is the Son of God who came into the world to carry out the will of His Father, by dying on the cross to save mankind from their sins. His words to His earthly mother were a *sign* of the time, the hour, for which He had come into the world. He knew His bloody death on the cross was to be His glory, where the Father would glorify the Son and the Son would glorify the Father. (cf: John 17:1–5)

Incidentally, in his Gospel, St John never calls the mother of Jesus by her given name. He only mentions her once more, and that is as she stands at the foot of the cross where Jesus once more calls her *woman* as He entrusts her to the care of the disciple whom He loved. (cf: John 19:25-27)

A *sign* gives information, pointing you towards something else. Changing water into wine was the first of Jesus *signs* and it revealed His glory as the Messiah and Savior of the world. God took on the flesh of man and revealed His glory throughout His earthly ministry. In His perfect obedience in life, suffering, and death, Jesus offered the true and lasting sacrifice for sin. No more stone jars for purification are required. In shedding His precious blood, He purifies you, cleansing you of your greed and covetousness, your gossiping and lying, your hateful heart, lustful eyes, and knees which bow down to worldly idols. He cleanses you from all of your sins, those you have done and those left undone.

Jesus did many *signs* in the presence of His disciples but for those of us who weren’t there, He gives other *signs*. First, He has given you His Word in *Holy Scripture*, not only as a *sign* pointing you to Jesus, but it also has the power of God to create and sustain faith in Him. (cf: Romans 1:16; 10:17) Secondly, He gives you the Sacraments. In the Augsburg Confession, the Lutheran reformers write:

“It is taught among us that the sacraments were instituted not only to be signs by which people might be identified outwardly as Christians, but that they are signs and testimonies of God’s will toward us for the purpose of awakening and strengthening our faith.” (AC III, 1)

Your **Baptism** is a **sign** and promise. In the early Church, baptismal fonts were made out of stone. They were large stone jars filled with water. Plain water. But when God's Word is added that water and all baptismal waters are a **sign** pointing you God's promise of salvation in your Baptism. His promise that you belong to Him and He's with you in all your trials and tribulations. It's a washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, justifying and sanctifying you in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. (cf: Titus 3:5-8)

You were the **sign** of the cross in Baptism marking you as one redeemed by Christ the crucified. In his Small Catechism Luther urges you to make the **sign** of the cross morning and evening, reminding yourself of God's promises in Baptism. You pastor marks you with the sign of the cross at the beginning of worship, invoking the Holy Trinity to be among us in worship. The **sign** of the cross important for it's what we proclaim.

"... we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles." (1 Corinthians 1:23)

The Lord's Supper is also **sign** and promise. It's the **sign** of the new covenant in Jesus' blood. It points to Jesus' promise that by partaking in His body and blood by faith, He has given you victory over sin, death, and the devil, strengthening and keeping you in the true faith until life everlasting. (cf: LC, VI, 22)

Your heavenly Father has given you all these **signs** 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. In faith, you and I then, in turn, rejoice and praise God that His Son has revealed His glory – and in response – we give Him all glory in our praise, in our good works, and in our deeds out of the love who first loved us enough to save us from our old sinful lives, save us for new lives of love and marriage and caring for and serving others as God in Christ has served us.

Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understand, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus,
Amen.