**Manifested at Cana**

Based on [John 2:1-11](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Jn2.1-11)

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The Second Sunday after the Epiphany

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The wedding at Cana is a famous miracle of Jesus. John even describes it as his first miracle that manifested his glory. That’s why we consider it during the season of Epiphany, which is Jesus manifesting himself to be God. We will consider four aspects of this manifestation today, and what is revealed here about God in Christ Jesus…

First, we see that Jesus blesses marriage and approves of it.

Jesus never married, so we might believe that to be like Jesus is to not yoke yourself to another person in such a way. St. Paul says as much in saying he wishes the Corinthians were like him and had the gift of celibacy because a married man is concerned about pleasing his wife, and an unmarried man about pleasing God. He’s right of course. But there are also plenty of unmarried men and women who are not concerned about pleasing God, who fornicate without marriage, who hoard savings and wealth to spend on themselves, who will prevent having children or even abort their pregnancies in order to pursue a life of self-fulfilment, which a spouse and children will get in the way.

But Jesus attends the wedding at cana, and blesses the couple by performing his first miracle there. In the beginning, God created them male and female and what God has joined let no man separate. He said be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth, both to our first parents, and our second…that is Noah and his wife after the flood. And at the tower of Babel, God cursed the tongues of men because, rather than filling the earth according to God’s command, they were gathering into one place according to their own devices. They were carving out a life for themselves on the earth, just like many are taught to do today, living according to their own ideas of self-fulfilment rather than according to the vocations God has given them in this life.

Marriage is not commanded, but neither is it forbidden. It is one of many callings of God, and He will bless it for those who seek his blessing by entering into it according to his will and commands. And marriage in it’s ideal state, just as all things he institutes, are really just a mirror and dim reflection of his relationship to us, of Christ and his church.

Second, we see here the impulse of the faithful towards prayer in all circumstances. Jesus' mother finds out that the wine has run out, and wants to help the bridegroom avoid shame. What a shame should the marriage be sullied at its outset by such a memorable blunder. So she turns to Jesus for help–that is, she prays.

We ought to remember that prayer is not folding your hands or lifting them, closing your eyes, reciting certain words, or making the sign of the cross. We often make certain gestures in prayer to indicate to ourselves and prepare for talking to God who is unseen. But when you see God in the flesh, and have him in the room with you as Mary did…prayer is simply going up to him and asking him, like you would ask anyone for help. That’s what Mary does. She asks Jesus for help.

And a further note on prayer. We begin the Lord’s prayer with asking that God’s will be done. This means that, whatever we ask for next, we always understand that God will accomplish for us things in his own way and time. So when Jesus doesn’t simply say “yes I’ll help with the wine problem” but gives an evasive answer, his mother tells the servants to “do whatever he tells you”. In other words, like the canaanite woman who is eager for even scraps from the master’s table, Mary understands that, despite his seeming unresponsive, whatever Jesus does with her prayer is meet, right and salutary. With prayer, it is enough to know that we have asked God for what we need, and that he loves us and will not forsake us.

Third, Jesus turns water into wine. This is an extravagant miracle. Afterward, Jesus will cast out demons, give blind men sight, even raise some from the dead. Such miracles cast out the evils of death and the devil. But changing water into wine in no apparent way demonstrates the power of Jesus to overcome and conquer the darkness of this present age.

And yet this is his first miracle in which he manifests his glory. His glory is not simply conquering death and the devil, but also lavishly giving to his children good and gracious gifts to bless them in this life. And we shouldn’t say he changes water into wine…that sounds like a magic trick. Better to understand that he takes what is a basic necessity of life–water, and adds something to it that sweetens the taste and gladdens the hearts of men. He *makes* the water…wine.

So too, our hearts are gladdened by the forgiveness and salvation, bound to his body and blood, which he adds to simple bread and wine. God manifests his glory sacramentally. He takes created things and adds to them, blesses them to give us blessings. He makes bread and wine his body and blood to forgive and renew the hearts of men.

Fourth, God’s ways are not our ways. The master of the feast says, Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now.” In other words, what kind of a fool saves the best wine for ***after*** people’s palette has been dulled, and ***after*** their hearts are already gladdened. People who progress to the third or fourth glass of wine generally aren’t going to be drinking for taste anyways, but for effect. Why would anyone save the best wine for last?

When describing the gospel over against the law of Moses, he says “you don’t put new wine in old wineskins, otherwise they’ll burst. New wine is for new wineskins.” Likewise, the gospel is not placed within the old testament, sacrifices, circumcisions, feasts and sabbaths, laws and regulations…but the gospel is placed in the new testament, love, gentleness, kindness self control. At first, God’s people lived with laws and regulations in place. Now we live according to the Spirit of the living God, who is given to us as a guarantee that we may live not by the letter but the Spirit, offering spiritual sacrifices to God and our neighbor, and as Jesus does for a wedding couple in Cana…helping one another in any need.