

John 2:1-11
Second Sunday after Epiphany
January 16, 2022

We noted last week that we have entered the season of Epiphany, and you may have wondered, just what is that? We use words like manifestation and revelation in a definition but those may not be any clearer. Simply put, the Epiphany season shows the truth that Jesus is the Son of God and Savior of the world. We hear his teachings and see him in action in his public ministry. We enjoy the Christmas season that we have recently completed, but Jesus is so much more than a child born in difficult circumstances. Today we join him early in his ministry and

JESUS GRANTS US AN EPIPHANY

- I. Of his position
- II. Of his power
- III. Of his person

Jesus brought a revelation of his position to his mother Mary. It occurred at a wedding in the small town of Cana, about ten miles from his home in Nazareth. Last week we heard of his baptism which anointed him to set forth on his public ministry. From there he went out into the wilderness where he spent forty days facing and defeating temptations from Satan, who wanted to deter him from his mission. After that he gathered some of his first disciples; at least five were now with him.

They, along with Mary, were invited to this wedding. Back then wedding celebrations often lasted for a week. There was feasting and entertainment. Wine was the common drink in their society; its supply was running low at this particular wedding.

Mary brought the problem to Jesus. What did she expect him to do about it? No previous miracles had been recorded in the Bible as being done by him, but there were those special events that pointed to his unique makeup such as the annunciation by the angel to Mary prior to her pregnancy. There were the visitors after his birth, first the shepherds and later the wise men from the east. The incident in the temple when he was twelve years old had left an impression. The Bible tells us how Mary pondered these matters, so she was sure he was the right one to tell about the need.

His response: "Dear woman, why do you involved me?" Jesus replied. 'My time has not yet come.'" That reply may strike us as a bit odd, but there was no disrespect involved. Jesus was reminding her that he was no longer her boy at

home but was now carrying out his public ministry so he took his cue from his heavenly Father. Their relationship had changed. Mary didn't take offense at his words nor did she give up hope. She must have noted those words "not yet." She told the servants to follow whatever instructions he gave.

There's a lesson for all of us in this incident. We see an indication that he is in charge. He is supreme. He was not a genie in a bottle to be ordered around by our whims.

You and I can go to him in times of need but we let him determine the course of action to follow and the timing of it. He is wiser than we are and sees the big picture. He will act in accord with his purposes.

We accept in faith whatever he does, whether the answer is yes or no or not yet. He knows what he is doing. He is above us.

II.

It seems there was not long to wait for that "not yet" to come about as Jesus granted an epiphany and performed his first miracle. Standing nearby were large jars containing water that was used in ceremonial washings. Those actions were a biggy for the Jewish people. The largest section of the Talmud (the traditions and interpretations of the Old Testament law) related to purification. There were six big jars, containing twenty to thirty gallons each. Some of you may remember the days of milk cans on the farm or you have seen them now used as decorations. Most of those held ten gallons; these jars were two to three times that size. Jesus told the servants to fill each one to the brim so that there was no room for additives. After that there was no more action, no hocus-pocus or magic words, just the instruction, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." The men did as they were told but maybe they were wondering, "What's going on? What good will this do?"

There was surprise as the man in charge of the wedding reception tasted the sample they brought and it was wine. Something like that just doesn't happen. Water is water. Wine takes grapes and a fermenting process of some length. But not here. This man had power unlike any other.

The extent of the miracle was brought out in the conversation that ensued between the master of the banquet and the groom. The normal pattern is to serve the best wine first. After some time the taste buds are dulled (that's why at a formal wine tasting you cleanse your palette between samples). Later in the celebration you can slip in some cheaper product. However, this wine was far superior. When

Jesus blesses he is not skimpy, which was shown in both the quantity and quality of the wine he miraculously provided.

We might have some concern by the wording, "After the guests have had too much to drink," as if Jesus was contributing to drunkenness. Some other translations render the phrase "have drunk freely," or "plenty." We can be sure Jesus was not encouraging misuse of his gift.

His power clearly showed in this miracle. We often define a miracle as something only God can do. That's a simple way to describe it, but an accurate one. It is an event that is beyond natural occurrence. This miracle was the first one he performed. There would be many more to come as we know he is God.

The miracle demonstrated that truth and met the need of the wedding couple, but it was not a showy act. Few knew what really happened as they benefitted from his powerful deed.

Our Lord can still do miracles. We don't demand them from him but his power hasn't waned. There are times when there is no logical explanation for what has happened. Patients for whom the doctors held out no hope have recovered from their conditions. A solution to a problem came at just the right time, which reminds us that some of the miracles use natural events but the timing reveals God's hand. Never underestimate what he can do. Live daily with confidence in his care.

III.

There is an even bigger lesson we want to take home with us from Cana. Jesus grants an epiphany of his person. John termed the miracle a sign. It pointed to the identity of Jesus. He is and always has been true God. He is not limited in what he is able to do.

"He thus revealed his glory," John noted. He was living on this earth as a human being, eating, drinking, walking about and attending events like this wedding. He was in a state of humiliation, not regularly using his divine powers but glimpses like this did come that showed he was not ordinary. He had a unique person as God and man in one being.

There was a purpose for his unique existence. He was here on a mission. He came to rescue the world from sin, which plagues us all. Whether it is a lack of trust in God, misuse of his gifts or mistreatment of the people around us, we are covered in sin and lost on our own. If we are aware of our plight and try to do something

about it, we only dig ourselves deeper in the hole. We lack the ability to solve our problem of sin.

But not Jesus. He came to our world, took on humanity and lived in perfect obedience to God's will. Then he went to the cross to suffer the pains of hell that our sins deserved. Because he has paid the price, they are gone. We are reconciled with our Father in heaven and at peace with him.

The Savior's purpose was achieved. "His disciples put their faith in him." This event was not their first encounter—they had already been called to faith and were his followers. Now they had a deeper, more sure faith. They knew they were on the right side.

We also know that. Jesus can be trusted. He is true God and true man, our Substitute who won forgiveness and eternal life for us. You can trust him for everything you need on earth now and for heaven eternally.

Many more months would follow in the ministry of Jesus as the disciples followed him and learned from him. Not all would bring the enjoyment of a wedding celebration and days of free food and drink. There would be numerous more miracles that demonstrated his almighty power as he healed the sick, cast out demons, stilled storms and even raised the dead. There would be crowds who listened but also opponents who rejected him and tried to trap him in his words. Many followers would turn away because they discovered he wasn't what they were seeking. Enemies plotted and took his life. When times were tough they could look back to these epiphanies and be assured he was in charge, doing everything in accord with his plans.

We gain the same benefit from reviewing these accounts. That's why we keep coming to God's house to hear his Word and open our Bibles at home. The events may be familiar, but they keep providing the strength we need to meet the challenges life brings. We gain strength from knowing what Jesus can do and has done. And know he will keep on doing just what you need when you need it.

Jesus has granted us an epiphany. We recognize his position, his power and his person. Trust him as your Savior.