

Sermon John 2 1 11 2nd S of Epiphany Series C

Sermon: 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Epiphany

Text: John 2:1-11 (v. 1, 2) – The Wedding at Cana

Theme: Jesus sanctifies the earthly joy of His children

Goal: To look to our family as a gift of God and as part of His good plan for our salvation

Dear Friends,

*Introduction:* In spite of the fact that sexuality has been abused and misused in our society, and all kinds of perversions, serving nothing but selfish pleasure, are being practiced in this area, sexuality remains something good in the eyes of God and is part of His gracious plan for humankind. The perversions don't cancel God's original plan for a man and a woman as they live together as a married couple and enjoy their sexuality. Christians are not angels, asexual beings; but sex is part of our nature, like we need food, water, security, friends... The healthy relationship between man and women in a marriage is the way God gives, to control and to satisfy our desires. We must not pervert our minds with all the rubbish that is around us in magazines and movies. But we need to be aware that the sexual life between a man and a woman in the marriage is pleasant to God and has His blessings. To those who are not married, God gives strength to live a pure life as well.

*I – Jesus was invited to a wedding*

When Jesus and His disciples were invited to a wedding in Cana of Galilee, He sanctified the wedding not only by His presence, but also by the big, unique gift He gave to the couple and to the other invited guests: The miracle of changing water into wine, - and a lot of wine!

We still celebrate weddings at the church and we rejoice with the new couple as a sign and a testimony that this is according to God's will. We remember with gladness the Wedding Anniversaries and we give thanks to God for this blessing. There is nothing dirty, immoral or against God's Law when a couple come together in marriage – as

it was misinterpreted by the Puritans and other religious groups of the past and it is still misinterpreted by some religions and even by some Christian churches.

A wedding at Jesus' time was not just a half an hour ceremony and a party after that. It was a family celebration which could go on for a week, eating, drinking, dancing, rejoicing together with friends and family. We tend to have an image of Jesus that He was always walking with a halo around His head, never smiling, being the Holy One of God. Of course He is the Holy One of God; but He was at the same time a human being like us, and He had His sentiments of sadness and happiness, hunger and tiredness... and He enjoyed a good meal and a party at the house of His friends.

Don't leave Jesus restricted to the church building. Always invite Him everywhere: to your homes; to your meals using the common Table Prayer "*Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest...*"; to your leisure and relaxing times. He promised to be with us always and he wants it; don't exclude Him from some of your activities or from your family.

### *II – Jesus blesses the couple*

Running out of food and wine for the guests at a wedding was very embarrassing for a family. The mother of Jesus seemed to be very closely related to the young couple's family. When she realized that there was no wine anymore, she approached Jesus and told Him about the situation. Jesus' answer to His mother seemed to be a little bit rude; but she didn't make a problem about it and she just said to the servants: "Do whatever he tells you." Perhaps she had had some good experiences of Jesus' miraculous power at home... We don't know... But she trusted that Jesus would be able to do something to help the couple. And we know what happened: Jesus changed the contents of six stone water jars into wine. A family that runs a winery

calculated that “twenty to thirty gallons” times six would be 76 cases of wine, each case has 12 bottles. This would be more than enough for 2,736 people!!! (Phil Brandt, p. 1). And it was very good wine, much better than the wine the family had provided for the guests.

The text is not advocating drunkenness. But it allows us to say that it is not sin to have some wine and to rejoice in a party. Each of us must know his/her limit. For some, one glass is enough; others can have a bottle. We need to have self-control.

What is important in this detail of the text is that Jesus is concerned about our physical and material needs. Is it not by chance that Jesus taught us to pray: “Give us this day our daily bread.” And we know that this includes everything we need, - even the wine in this Capital of Wine city! How many employees receive their daily bread from and depend on this business?

Another detail is that the servants obeyed Jesus without questioning his instructions. It is not just a matter of obedience; but a matter of truth and faith. The Word of Jesus changed water into wine. What shall we say about the Word of Jesus added to the water in the Holy Baptism? And the Word of Jesus added to bread and wine in the Holy Communion? A simple Word, - because it's Jesus' Word, - makes big miracles! Just believe and obey; it will happen and you will receive Jesus' blessings.

### *III – A sign*

All right. But this story is not merely about wine, feast, marriage, joy, and blessings. It has a bigger goal. The story finishes with the comment: “This, the first of His miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and His disciples put their faith in Him.” The Apostle John, the author of this Gospel, calls the miracles of Jesus as “signs” of His Messianic task. The miracles were

not only performed to help people, but also to show who Jesus was: The Holy One of God, the Son incarnate, the Promised Messiah. This is one of the purposes why we celebrate Epiphany after Christmas. Christmas shows the humbleness of the Son of God being born in a stable and brought up in a very simple way by His human parents. It is like a gift that needs to be unwrapped. It is difficult to see His glory “wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger” (Luke 2:12). In the events of Epiphany, beginning with the visit of the Magi; followed by Jesus’ baptism and God Himself declaring “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased” (Luke 3:22); today with this “sign” that revealed His glory and His disciples put their faith in Him; and in all other Epiphany’s events, we “unwrap” the babe in the manger and we can see the true nature and character of this Jesus of Nazareth, (Phil Brandt, p. 1) the Son of God, manifesting Himself to His people.

Epiphany means Manifestation.

Conclusion: What kind of God is your God? Is He only a God from far? or a God remembered only in times of big problems? or only a God for Sundays? to forgive your sins? A God to provide for spiritual matters only?... or care for the small needs of the day-by-day life too?

Luther explained the 1<sup>st</sup> Commandment in the Large Catechism: *To have a god means this: You expect to receive all good things from it and turn to it in every time of trouble. Yes, to have a god means to trust and to believe in Him with your whole heart. I have often said that only the trust and faith of the heart can make God or an idol. If your faith and trust are true, you have the true God, too. On the other hand, where trust is false, is evil, there you will not have the true God either. Faith and God live together. I tell you, whatever you set your heart on and rely on is really your god.* – Let us set our heart on the true God, who revealed Himself as a God of mercy in all situations of our life through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Pastor Carlos Walter Winterle, Cape Town, 17 January 2016