

John 2:1-11

“Given a Sign”

Second Sunday after the Epiphany (C)

January 19, 2025

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, West Salem, Wisc.

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Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen! Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

“This, the first of His signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested His glory. And His disciples believed in Him” (John 2:11).

The account of Jesus at the wedding at Cana is often used as an example of the high place Jesus gives to the sanctity of marriage. While it is true that Jesus honors the marriage of husband and wife, St. John tells us that this miracle of Jesus turning water into wine is a sign that manifests Jesus’ glory. St. John tells of the events at Cana for one purpose and one purpose alone: that ***“His disciples believed in Him”*** (John 2:11).

So, at the wedding in Cana, Jesus gives us a sign that reveals Him as our salvation.

St. John writes, ***“This, the first of His signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested His glory. And His disciples believed in Him”*** (John 2:11). But St. John does not speak of signs as we may think of them. You see, often, we may think of signs as mere symbols, or something that stands for something else. For St. John, this is *not* the case. For St. John, the word “sign” really means something that points to, or is linked with. Quite literally, the Greek word that we translate for “sign” here means “mystery.” In the same way, “mystery” in Latin is translated as “sacrament.”

A sacrament is a mystery and a mystery is a sign that points to something or reveals something hidden from ordinary sight.

So, these “signs” reveal something that you would not otherwise know or recognize unless someone or something revealed it to you. A “sign” is something like a gift waiting to be opened. That gift is a mystery until it is opened and revealed. A sign is something visible for our faith to hold on to. And so it is with the Lord’s gifts of His Means of Grace manifested in lowly water, simple bread, and wine. They are signs. They are mysteries. These Means of Grace point to Jesus because they are linked to Jesus. Holy Baptism, Absolution, the Word, and the Lord’s Supper are signs of Jesus’ real bodily presence among us as the Creator and Redeemer. In these signs, we experience the death Jesus died to give us life.

This is how Jesus has chosen to reveal Himself to you and to come to you, in signs in which He resides. But there is a problem. Now, the problem is not with the signs. The problem is us. We are all poor, miserable sinners who seek after all sorts of signs, and not just the signs that Jesus has given to us.

You see, sometimes we seek Jesus through emotions, which lift us to heaven so that we can feel His presence, while we ignore Him when He is right in our very presence in water, Word, bread and wine. We often pray for miracles and signs instead of relying on the miracles and signs He has already provided. You may be afraid that Jesus will not fulfill what He has promised unless we see or experience some sort of a miraculous sign.

Because of that fear, we often cannot find comfort in what Jesus has already given, so we seek Jesus in the Law. But the thing is, the Law is empty. The Law cannot save you. The Law can only accuse us and destroy us. So many of us have drunk this inferior wine and how has it left us? Not satisfied. We drank the bottles dry and all we have left is pain, despair and death.

But Jesus came to fulfill the Law. Just as there were six stone jars to be filled, Jesus fulfilled all that was commanded in the Law. He lived the perfect life for you. He accomplished what we are unable to do. And for living the perfect life, He was falsely accused as a blasphemer, a fraud. He would suffer and die as the perfect sacrifice for yours and my sins.

We know Jesus was the perfect sacrifice since He is no longer in the grave. He lives! After spending three days in the belly of the earth, He gives us His greatest sign. His grave is empty! He is not there! He is risen! Jesus has fulfilled the Law to the brim, and now His cup of grace runs over.

Through His death and bodily resurrection, Jesus now gives us a new and better wine. We are not purified by the Law, but instead by His holy and precious blood shed for you and me for the forgiveness of yours and my sins. In Him and through Him, we are given the gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation!

And Jesus loves life! This is why He came into this fallen and dark world. He came into a world that was made through Him, and yet the world did not know Him. His own people did not recognize Him. They did not receive Him.

On this Sanctity of Human Life Sunday, we recall how many parents sadly do not recognize their own offspring by choosing to live in the dark. This darkness has a name, and it is sin, iniquity, and evil. Many parents only see their offspring as a “choice” rather than a life. But there is an answer for this darkness. You see, ***“the light shines in the darkness”*** (John 1:5a). Despite our sinful selves, Jesus enters as He drives away the darkness by His everlasting light. He died blameless to absolve all guilt and He rose from the dead so our consciences would have release.

Today, Jesus continues to provide His light through signs that point to Him. He has provided us mysteries in the Sacraments. There, Jesus is hidden in lowly water and simple bread and wine. In these divine miracles, Jesus is revealed to you. In the Sacraments, Jesus continues to reveal Himself as Lord over all creation.

As we heard last week, in the waters of Holy Baptism, Jesus says, ***“Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine”*** (Isaiah 43:1). There in the waters of Holy Baptism, He makes you His own!

Now, it’s not the water only that makes you His own, for that is just plain water, but He makes you His own when His Word and command is added to that water.

So, just as He turned water into wine, with His Word and by His command, He also gave water the power to redeem you. Baptism is a ***“washing of regeneration”*** (Titus 3:5) as it re-creates you in newness of life in Christ Jesus!

Likewise, the Lord’s Supper is a sign of your redemption in Jesus Christ. For ***“the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin”*** (1 John 1:7). This is a miracle that we will soon witness as Jesus’ true Body and true Blood under bread and wine forgives your sins and gives you life everlasting. Through these means, He restores His Bride, the Church.

Today, we recall how Jesus began using signs to reveal His glory. And again, a “sign” points to something. And this sign as Jesus turned six water jars into wine provided a physical way to point to a spiritual truth that Jesus is the Son of God. This “sign” proved Jesus’ divine authority and majesty.

This, Jesus’ first sign, took place not in Jerusalem, but in the obscure village of Cana in Galilee.

We may have expected a huge crowd of witnesses for this first sign. Instead, without fanfare, Jesus did what God set before Him to do. He needed to reveal Himself as the Messiah to strengthen the faith of His disciples. And He did that. ***“This, the first of His signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested His glory. And His disciples believed in Him”*** (John 2:11). They had new evidence that Jesus was the promised Messiah. They saw the glory of God through this sign. We, too, see God’s glory through His Means of Grace, His Word and Sacraments.

So now let us do as Mary advised: ***“Do whatever He tells you”*** (John 2:5). For Jesus says, ***“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel”*** (Mark 1:15) and ***“Take, eat; this is My body, which is given for you. Take, drink; this is My blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of your sins.”*** Amen.

*The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding,
keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.*

+ SOLI DEO GLORIA +