



'No Ordinary Sunday: Water Becomes Wine'

Second Sunday after Epiphany
8:30 & 10:45 am, Sunday, January 17, 2016
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Camp Hill, Pennsylvania

[Psalm 36:5-10](#); [1 Corinthians 12:1-11](#); [John 2:1-11](#)

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

It wasn't **that** big a deal. Ok, sure, none of us here can turn water into wine. But it was just that. Six large stone jars filled with water become, at the hands of Jesus, the best-tasting wine yet served three days into a very long wedding reception. A neat trick, but not the greatest miracle one could think up.

Oh, a greater miracle would have been if someone somehow could have massaged the outcome of Powerball this week so everyone's numbers would have been winners. On Wednesday, I actually received an email from a member asking if I would bless a Powerball ticket. The email was tongue-in-cheek...mostly. And no, I wouldn't bless a Powerball ticket, even if it had been mine. I can't turn water into wine.

But water-into-wine and winning Powerball tickets would still be small miracles in the big scheme of things. World peace—now that would be something. A miracle. Frankly, that's where I want God's attention riveted and God's wisdom and power at work. That's where I want the Prince of Peace making a difference.

Yet there is reason to tell this story that comes from the earliest days of Jesus' ministry. Not because the event is important in and of itself. So a wedding party might have to end earlier than planned because they ran out of wine—big deal. So a bunch of family and friends then end up with their thirst assuaged, and continue to revel at a wedding banquet—big deal. Turns out Jesus solved the problem, and provided more and better wine so their reveling became extra tasty, though it's probable by that time their taste buds were numb, anyway—so, big deal.

What's important is what the story of water-turned-to-wine points to beyond itself. Our gospel writer John doesn't even call this event a "miracle." He calls it a **sign**. The first sign of several in the life of Jesus that point to something true, and truly miraculous. What this sign does is point to the glory of God revealed in the person of Jesus himself. What this sign does is move his earliest disciples to believe in him. That's really the purpose of the whole thing.

This sign might not even have taken place without a little coaxing from Jesus' mother, Mary. Jesus didn't initiate the event, but Mary saw a need, saw this moment in time as a moment where Jesus and his power could be shown, Jesus revealed for who he really is, and she goes for it. There is a bit of reluctance on Jesus' part, which I find

fascinating. Is it because Jesus is waiting for a different moment where something bigger can take place? Grander, more important actions? Not water to wine, not a winning Powerball ticket, but world peace?

Jesus says to his mother, "My hour has not yet come." My time has not yet arrived. If it sounds cryptic, it's not meant to be. Jesus knows he is sent from God to our world. He has a mission to bring the truth of God to light in his own person, and to draw others to this light. Whatever might best reveal his role, his mission in this world so people will believe and follow—well, making tasty wine out of water wouldn't seem to be very effectual, would it now? Instead, how about this? A journey that includes healing of the sick, raising friends from the dead, forgiveness of sins, speaking truth in the face of evil, and dying and then rising again for the sake of the world—THAT would be effective. That's the kind of stuff into which Jesus will pour his energy and life. Those are the things where God will reveal his glory so all the world can see and believe.

So it's interesting that in spite of Jesus' initial reluctance, he eventually does perform this sign. He could have refused. And this story would never have been part of our biblical canon. We'd still have the stories of everything else Jesus did. The miracle at Cana absent from the Bible? Big deal.

So what does it mean for us that Jesus would take on this little miracle in the big scheme of things? Do something that seems frivolous when humanity's needs were so much greater than running out of wine? Maybe it's this: We should never doubt that Jesus **will** respond to human need in some way, shape or manner. Now, it's true that some of our human needs do seem frivolous. Yet I think the story of the wedding at Cana tells us Jesus won't stand aloof to us even with our sometimes silly needs and petty issues and minor concerns. Here's the Son of God who has come into our world, and he cares about us and all that we are. Here is Jesus, crucified and risen from the dead, bringing that very Easter light and life into all of our particular moments of need, however trivial or unimportant they may seem to someone else.

If Jesus stoops to grace us in the little requests, the pleas and petitions stemming from the many mundane areas of human life, might he not also respond in grace in the big things? **And can we then trust him in all things?**

There's something else to consider here. Water into wine may not be a big deal to most of us, but it was for someone.

This week, a Trinity member reminded me of an acquaintance of hers named Leon, whom she introduced to me several years ago. Leon was, for all intents and purposes, homeless. No real family to help him out. There might also have been addiction in his earlier years—I'm not sure. I can't even recall how she met Leon in the first place, but she offered him friendship, as she was able. She also brought him here to worship on several occasions. A few of us here learned his name, and had opportunity to talk with him after worship.

That Trinity member maintained a connection with Leon, who died a couple years ago. This past week, she reminded me about Leon. And she mentioned his reaction when

I said his name at the time of Holy Communion, and looked into his eyes as I pressed the bread into his hands. She mentioned his reaction when a few of you greeted him by name and shared the Peace of Christ with him. She told me Leon was simply amazed that we called him by his name, that we touched his hand and looked into his eyes. That wasn't something that would happen on the streets. **Ever.** And Leon expressed to her more than once the depth of his delight that such small acts of kindness were given. Big deal? To Leon, it apparently was a very big deal. Little things can be big signs of God's grace in our world, and as Jesus' disciples, we have opportunity to offer them. That's what the first disciples of Jesus learned at Cana, and it's what we learn today.

Listen to how David Lose, president of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, interprets this sign for us: "...every moment that we live in Jesus...has the capacity to mediate the divine. Bread and wine can bear Christ's body and blood. An ordinary hug can convey unbounded love and blessing. The smallest donation of food or money can tip the balance between scarcity and abundance. A simple act of kindness can make all the difference in the world. And a smile, shared at just the right time, can shed light into the darkest of places." ("Learning to Tell Time," David Lose, Workingpreacher.com, 2013)

At first, Jesus said his hour, his time had not yet come. And then he lived that hour fully at Cana. Maybe it means that those of us who follow Jesus will find **our** hour has come as well. The hour comes on our drive to work, in the lunchroom at school, in our family room at home, on the streets in our neighborhood, at the coffee hour in our Gathering Space, and in all the mundane places of our lives where the little things we say and do take on the miraculous because God in Jesus Christ infuses our ordinary lives with his power, love and grace. And it can become a very big deal. **AMEN.**

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