

Epiphany 2 (2026) (1662 Gospel)

The organist was playing Bach’s “Sheep shall safely graze,” as impeccably dressed groomsmen were seating the parents of groom and bride.

The groom and his men were outside the church waiting for the signal to come in and take their place before the Altar.

Members of the bridal party were downstairs checking their hair and dresses one last time.

I don’t remember where I was, but minutes before the procession was to go down the aisle, I was summoned. There was a crisis.

The room where the ladies’ shoes had been laid out had gotten locked. I had no key on me.

There was only one thing to do . . . slam the door with my body weight. It worked. Little

Hercules came through! There was some minor damage to the frame, but not much.

Disaster was averted, and members of the congregation were blissfully unaware of what had just taken place. It was not long before:

“On the human love fell the heavenly grace, Making two hearts forever one,” to quote Father Abram Ryan, poet-priest of the Confederacy.

I begin with this story to say that weddings are wonderful events, but there can be some chilly moments. The village wedding at Cana was no exception.

The chilly moment at this wedding came at what we would call the reception. The crisis, the wine ran short.

Viewed through our cultural lenses that might not seem that big a deal.

So what if the guests had to go home after two drinks rather than four or more? At least they wouldn't be in danger of getting a DUI or waking up the next morning with a hangover!

Yet, when viewed in its historical context, the situation was quite a bit more serious. The late Merrill Tenney, a long-time professor of New Testament and Greek at Wheaton College explains:

“To fail in providing adequately for the guests would involve social disgrace. In the closely knit communities of Jesus’ day such an error would never be forgotten and would haunt the newly married couple all their lives.”

Thank goodness Jesus was there.

An advertising jingle from the 1960s says, **“Things go better with Coke.”**

That may or may not be so, but “**Things go better with Jesus!**” is true all the time, everywhere.

A practical lesson we might take from the wedding of Cana is to actively invite Jesus to all our events and parties.

If you find the thought of His presence uncomfortable, you should probably not be there yourself! Put more bluntly, you may well be “up to no good!”

The snapshot of Jesus we have before us this morning reminds us He is not a stern killjoy, but one who brings life to a party. He is the ‘bubble in the champagne’.

In the case of the wedding of Cana, His presence made the difference between honour and dishonor . . . between a joyous occasion and one that would have haunted this family for many years to come.

But there is more here than a one-of great miracle which saved a family's honor.

This miracle was the first of seven signs recorded in John's Gospel. All seven were put down for the self-same purpose: so that people might discover for themselves who Jesus is.

We know this to be so because John reveals his hand at the end of his Gospel. Summing up he says:

“. . . these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name” (John 20:31).

Before I pass on, let me ask, “Have you discover the significance of Jesus in your life?” If not, get on with the task. He, after all, came to bring life to the full.

But there is more.

In this homely story, we see the old order coming to an end and a new one is beginning. By the “old order” I mean the arrangement God made with the people of God at Mount Sinai.

This old order is symbolized in today’s story by the water pots used in this miracle.

These large stone containers, each holding between 20 and 30 gallons, were used for Jewish ceremonial cleansing before meals or religious rituals. On this occasion, they are transformed from their ritual purpose to a celebratory one.

What the Law of Moses – the old order -- could do only externally; Jesus could do at a much deeper level.

Instead of a merely cleansing the hands, His cleansing included a scrubbing of the heart . . . remaking men from the inside out.

I am reminded of a story. A man was running for a political office and was speaking to a crowd telling them what he was going to do if elected. “I’m going to put a new coat on every man,” he shouted.

An old street preacher shouted back: “Jesus can do one better. He can put a new man in every coat.”

Well, that’s the difference. The Old Covenant – thought good and God-given -- was preparatory and limited in its scope.

Jesus brings what was prefigured in the Mosaic Law to its appointed goal. That is how we should view those clay waterpots which became vessels of the wine of new creation.

Jesus’ wine, moreover, speaks of joy.

“I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly,”
Jesus will go on to say.

Why not discover this joy yourself? Help for today, hope for tomorrow, that is what Jesus brings.

And, even if you are a long-time believer, there is always room for more understanding and growth. This is what we find happening to the disciples that day.

They had already *believed* on Jesus. After all, they had left all and were following Him.

Yet, in today’s passage we are told that Jesus “manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.”

What seems to be going on here is that their faith was confirmed and strengthened. Their

eyes were stretched wider still. It was for them an epiphany moment.

In the act of changing water into wine, they saw their friend and teacher do what only God could do and does continuously. Let me explain.

In the beginning the Creator set in motion an order which includes sunshine and rain, seedtime and harvest.

In the case of wine, water which falls from above is taken up into grape vines, which draw their strength and vitality from the sun.

This moisture is absorbed through the roots of these plants and eventually becomes the juice found in the berries. Then, through the process of fermentation, also a part of God's order, that juice is transformed into wine, which, according to the Psalmist 'makes glad the heart of man'.

C.S. Lewis in his book *Miracles* suggests that in the miracle of Cana the laws of nature were not put aside but sped up.

What under normal circumstances would have taken weeks and months happened in a span of a few moments.

When Jesus' disciples saw this, they must have sensed that they had in their midst a prophet – yes -- but One more than a prophet . . . the One who called creation into being in the beginning.

Furthermore, throughout the biblical narrative we discover that the Creator is also the Provider.

When, for example, Adam and Eve became aware of their nakedness, God provided clothes of animal skins to cover them . . . to cover their shame.

Later, after the Hebrews left Egypt and found themselves pursued by Pharoah's army and hemmed in by the Red Sea, God provided a way of escape. He rolled back the waters and created a pathway for them to pass over on.

Finally – third example -- when they had nothing to drink and eat in the dessert, He provided water from a rock and bread from heaven.

What does Jesus do at the wedding at Cana?

He does what He sees His Father do. He provides. This time wine, and lots of it . . . over 100 gallons. More than that, it is of the highest quality. No Gallo in a box!

The God we meet in Jesus still provides. Let me end with a story.

A West Virginia miner was bad to drink. When he got paid, he would spend all his money

down at the local saloon. It became so bad that his family had to sell their furniture to put food on the table.

Eventually, some of the men at the local church became aware of the situation and began to work with this man. Eventually, he was gloriously converted. Over time, the family was able to rebuild their life, refurnish their home.

Then one day down in the mines, a skeptic asked him: **“Do you really believe all those stories in the Bible . . . like the one about Jesus turning water into wine?”**

The man responded thoughtfully, **“I don’t know about turning water into wine, but I know He has turned whiskey into furniture in my life.”** /// The God we meet in Jesus is the Creator God and still provides.

Let Him turn water into wine -- or whatever into whatever -- in your life.