

“Bread, Wine, and Water”

John 2:1-11

On Monday, as I was teaching at St. James, we talked about a number of things, as they tend to have good questions. Our focus was on prayer and what it means to be a disciple. Very simply, God makes you His disciple. You did not choose to be a child of God. You were made to be His child and He placed His name, His seal upon you in Baptism.

Last week, we celebrated the Baptism of our Lord, and also remembered our own Baptism where life-changing things happened. This is not just some initiation ritual that lets you be part of the club. You were baptized into the death of Christ. You were united with Him on the cross. You were buried with Him. Amazing things are possible when God does things with water. This week, we witness the first miracle of Christ’s ministry. Once again amazing things are possible when God does things with water.

This Epiphany Season is most wonderfully explained in the light of the Sacraments – Baptism and Holy Communion . The word “Epiphany” means a revealing – that which was once hidden is now seen. In the bread, wine, and water of the sacraments, the Word of God seems hidden, but, to us, it has been joyously revealed.

At the Wedding at Cana, Christ revealed His power in the form of a

miracle for the first time. The fullness of the power of God, the master of all creation, the eternal, all knowing, all powerful Lord of heaven and earth is seemingly just another guest at the wedding. Up until this time, His power has remained hidden. Over time, it will be more fully revealed.

Of course, we saw at Christ's Baptism that He was revealed, announced even, by both John the Baptist and God the Father Himself that Jesus is the Son of God – the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

But, in our Gospel today, we see a more subtle manifestation of Jesus as the Christ. He turns water into wine. A rather simple miracle as miracles go – I mean, it's not like raising the dead. But is any miracle really "simple?" There is good reason why this was Jesus' first miracle of His public ministry. If you read John's Gospel, you see the three elements everywhere – bread, wine, and water. I spoke about this with my 5th and 6th grade class at St. James on Monday. We were talking about ways in which we exercise our faith. One of them said reading the Bible. I talked to them about reading the Bible with purpose. What I like to do is read a book with one idea or theme in mind.

For instance, the last time I read Leviticus, I made a point to focus on how particular God is about the way in which He is worshiped. As He is the same yesterday, today, and forever, perhaps I need to be extra sure that the awe, honor, and reverence He deserves and obviously desires is found in what we do in between the Invocation and the Benediction.

So I encouraged the kids at St. James to read John's Gospel and make note of the number of times John refers to water, bread, and wine. Read John's Gospel with that in mind and you see how the sacramental life of the church flows seamlessly out of Christ's ministry.

As was mentioned last week, as we celebrated the Baptism of our Lord, Baptism is so much more than just a welcoming ceremony into the family of God. It is where we are brought into an intimate relationship with our Lord and Savior; where our body becomes the temple of the Holy Spirit; and we who were dead in our original unrighteousness are made alive in Christ. It is in the water and the Word that we are washed clean, and God reveals Himself and gives us His Name.

Likewise the value of Jesus' first miracle is not simply that the feast was able to continue and the host was not embarrassed. Running out to wine would have been a huge faux pas. It would be a major social blunder.

But Jesus came to prepare people for something far more important than a Galilean wedding celebration. He came to prepare them, and us, for the feast which has no end – the ultimate wedding feast of Christ and His bride, the Church.

Christ's preaching and ministry was to prepare the people to receive God's salvation. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world; yet, it was through bread, wine, and water that He would be most intimately received.

Water and wine – the first of His miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. It wasn't His most spectacular miracle. Many who were there didn't realize what had happened. But Christ revealed His glory through very subtle means. The servants knew from where the wine had come, and His disciples believed in Him. But most people went merrily about their business not realizing how present, active, and intimately involved God was in blessing their day. The world has not changed. Most people live their lives completely ignorant of how God blesses them with His continual presence and protection. As Luther says in the

Catechism, “God certainly gives daily bread to everyone without our prayers, even to all evil people.” God is always present, always rescuing us from the terrors Satan would inflict if he could. God is always feeding, nourishing, and nurturing us. We are His dear children. He is our faithful Father. But He accomplishes all of this in very subtle ways.

It is much like when you were baptized. God revealed Himself to you through very subtle means – seemingly simple water. But like at the wedding at Cana, a much greater power is present than that which meets the eye – the Word of God is joined with the water. The same holds true at the altar, the Word made flesh – Christ – offers His broken body and shed blood under those most simple forms of bread and wine.

Bread, wine, and water; they are everywhere in the Gospel of John. They are everywhere in the life of God’s people. Partaking of the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion is not something that we simply “do.” It is who we are. These are the marks of the Christian church. Christ’s Church is recognized where bread, wine, and water aren’t just bread, wine, and water. Christ’s Church is recognized where God’s children are baptized, the Word of God is proclaimed, and the catechized are fed.

Bread, wine, and water – God uses them in unusual and amazing ways. It is through these means that we who were dead in our sins are made alive in Christ. Through bread, wine, and water God has revealed Himself, washed us clean, and continues to feed us. He does this through subtle means. But like the disciples at the wedding at Cana, we know that it is by the power of God that our day has been blessed. Amen.