

Sermon

Epiphany 2C 2025 January 19, 2025

John 2:1-11

This year, on this Second Sunday after the Epiphany, we get the story of Jesus at the wedding in Cana. In Year A we have John the Baptist pointing out Jesus to some of his disciples and Andrew bringing his brother, Peter, to Jesus. And in Year B we have the encounter between Jesus and Nathanael. So in all three years of the lectionary on the Second Sunday after the Epiphany we hear from early in the Gospel of John. All three years are designed to set the tone for the season.

The Church year, as we know, is broken down into a number of seasons: Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent and Holy Week, Easter, Pentecost and following, until we start all over again. These seasons are designed to teach us about the events of the life of Christ and how Christ lived his life. Knowing the season can help direct us and focus our own devotions, as well as gain a deeper knowledge of the Christian mystery.

In Advent, we prepare for the coming of Christ. Christmas is a celebration of the coming of the Messiah. Lent is a time of penance, discipline, and self-denial as we look to make a substantial change to our lives. Holy Week turns our focus onto the Passion of Christ. Easter is the time of resurrection and new life. The Season after Pentecost is the longest season and the time we grow and mature in the faith.

Epiphany, where we are now, is the season of manifestation and revelation. The day of Epiphany is also called The Manifestation of Our Lord Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, and is symbolized by the arrival of the wise men. On the First Sunday after the Epiphany we see Jesus being baptized and revealed as God's Son by the Holy Spirit descending as a dove. On the Second Sunday after the Epiphany we get these readings from John pointing us to the Messiah.

Out of those three readings from John I mentioned, today's reading might be the most unclear. Jesus is at a wedding. They run out of wine. Mary comes to him and says, "They've run out of wine." Jesus basically responds, "And . . . what do you want me to do about it?" But then he has the servants fill the water jugs and take some to the steward who then tastes some of the best wine he's ever had.

Is this a case of a stereotypical, overbearing Jewish mother? Is it a case of a stubborn son finally giving in to parental demands? Or is it something else?

If Epiphany is the season of manifestation and revelation, then it's something else.

Mary seems to be representative of all of us. That is, she finds herself in a situation needing help. She's stuck. And like so many of us who get stuck, she goes to Jesus and says, "We need help." Granted, there are some differences here, but the general scene is the same: O Lord, help me out here!

In this instance, Mary (and us) want Jesus to bail us out. We want Jesus to save us from a bad situation or an embarrassing moment. We want Jesus to be our savior. But as is so often the case, we want Jesus to be our savior on *our* terms - fix this, bail me out of that, get me out of here, put me there.

Like the guy whose boat sinks in the ocean who says, "God, if you save me, I'll go to church every Sunday and pledge 50% of my salary." He sees land in the distance and starts swimming. As he gets closer, he begins feeling better about his chances; so he says, "You know, that may have been too much. Save me and I'll pledge 10% of my salary and go to church two times a month." Eventually he drags himself onto the beach and says, "Let me get back to you."

But we don't get Jesus on our terms, and anyone who says otherwise has made an idol out of the Jesus they want. The savior Jesus is not at our beck and call. He is not a magic talisman. Instead, he is a Savior that leads us into a changed life, drawing us closer to God. For this to happen, though, we need to listen to the other words of Mary: "Do whatever he tells you."

The servants didn't tell Jesus to do anything, they just listened to him. He asked them to do something relatively simple - put water into jugs and take some to the steward. The water was changed from what it was to what it could be.

We need to listen to Jesus. We need to listen and look for where he takes us. We are not called to be politically influential. We are not called to wield power. We are not called to build a nation or world in our image. What we are called to do, though, is to listen. We are called to change. We are called to live a life transformed by the loving presence of Christ.

As I said at the beginning, the Season of Epiphany is the season of manifestation and revelation. Jesus is manifested to the Gentiles on Epiphany. He is revealed as the Son of God at his baptism. He is pointed out and shown to have power over the natural world today.

Ultimately this manifestation and revelation is two-fold. First, keep your eyes open for the signs of Jesus in the world around you. Jesus very rarely appears as a blinding light that knocks you down; more often than not, Jesus appears in quiet, mystical ways that gently lead you to God.

And second, allow Jesus to work in you, making a change as substantial as water to wine so that your life may be a manifestation and revelation of Christ to the world around you.

Amen.