



Come and See!

January 20, 2019

The Word...

“There was a wedding at Cana in Galilee,
and the mother of Jesus was there....When the wine ran short,
the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine."
And Jesus said to her, "Woman, how does your concern affect me?
My hour has not yet come."

His mother said to the servers, "Do whatever he tells you."
Now there were six stone water jars there for Jewish ceremonial washings,
each holding twenty to thirty gallons.
Jesus told them, "Fill the jars with water." So they filled them to the brim."
(from Jn 2:1-11)

Pondering the Word...

The Wedding Feast at Cana is a favorite and familiar story. It appears only in John's Gospel, and I delight that it portrays Jesus' first miracle, not as a healing or driving out of a demon, but as keeping a joyful celebration going a little while longer...although if you consider we are talking about 120-180 more gallons of wine, I guess it went on for days!

Jesus' role in this story is front and center, but I like to consider the important roles others played. First, we have Mary. I imagine her observing, pondering as she so often does, and aware there is some sort of problem. She is attuned to the needs of others, looking for ways she might be of help. And then you have the servants. They play an essential role as they do "the heavy lifting" —literally! Even if the six stones jars were partially full, it's not like they can bring out a hose and fill them up. This task requires a lot of work, but they trust Mary and Jesus' instruction, and in doing so become some of the first witnesses to Jesus' power.

And I consider the bridegroom. We don't hear much about him, but I like to imagine he praises God for his good fortune. Does he eventually learn what really happened? Who knows, but he is grateful to God for the great blessing he has received.

Put yourself in this story. What role might you play?

Living the Word...

We hear in today's reading from First Corinthians that, "to each the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit." Every one of us has a role to play in bringing forth the miracle of God's love and mercy in the world. Perhaps we are good at recognizing others' needs and helping them find assistance. Very often, being part of God's work requires heavy lifting--literally and figuratively—moving our ego or fears out of the way; lifting up the spirits of someone suffering; carrying food and drink to those who are hungry and thirsty; building shelter for those who are homeless. And all of us have been the recipients of good fortune, compliments of our Lord and Savior. Let us praise and give thanks to God today for all those times we've been privileged to be part of the ongoing miracle of his love!

Personal Reflections and Ideas: _____

Jan 21: *“Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered; and when he was made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.”* (Heb 5:1-10)

“Some of the most valuable lessons are learned in the furnace of affliction.” (Albert Barnes) This truism is a tenet of every major religious and philosophical practice I can think of, theistic or nontheistic. We learn the most valuable lessons and we grow from trial and affliction. When the author of Hebrews says Jesus was made perfect, he is referring to his complete surrender to God’s will. But remember Jesus had his struggles, his feelings of fear and abandonment. He didn’t quite suffer silently, but *“offered prayers with loud cries and tears.”* And that is why he is the high priest we can turn to in our pain and sorrow. He cries out to God with us. Let him be your source of strength and comfort as you are being made perfect like him.

Jan 22: *“As Jesus was passing through a field of grain on the Sabbath, his disciples began to make a path while picking the heads of grain. The Pharisees said to him, “Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?”*(Mk 2:23-28) This passage is a good illustration of what Jesus means when he says he did not come to abolish the law but to fulfill it. The elders “throw the book at him,” quoting the law, and he shuts them down by relating a story of King David “violating” the law by eating the bread meant only for the priests (1 Sm 21). By saying *“the Sabbath was made for man,”* Jesus reestablishes God’s intent of a day set aside for praise, gratitude, and rest rather than the onerous restrictions added to God’s law. Think about this. Are there man-made rules—religious or secular—to which you adhere that in truth get in the way of your doing God’s will or impede God’s Spirit?

Jan 23: *He said to the Pharisees, “Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath rather than to do evil...”* *“But they remained silent. (He) looked around at them with anger and grieved at their hardness of heart.”* (Mk 3:1-6)

Mark tells us Jesus feels anger and grief. Some translations say Jesus is frustrated, even mortified by the hardness in the hearts of the elders. Righteous anger, as Jesus is feeling here, is not about oneself, but comes from compassion at seeing others treated unjustly. You don’t get a sense that the grief he experiences is about feeling sorry for the Pharisees, but more of a disgust at their failure to recognize the error of their ways. But he doesn’t lash out. He demonstrates to the assembled crowd what the Sabbath is all about—doing good in God’s name, even if it involves some risk. There’s lots of anger percolating these days, some righteous and some not. And unfortunately, some is leading to violence, not peaceful action. If you are angry, take a lesson from Jesus. Show by your actions and your willingness to take a risk that you are committed to doing good.

Jan 24: *“...he is mediator of a better covenant, enacted on better promises.”* (Heb 7:25-8:6)

The author of the Letter to the Hebrews (a disciple of Paul’s) makes a pretty bold statement: *“Better covenant, better promises.”* The audience is Jewish Christians, but you can see why these words might strike some as blasphemous. The author has just explained how God’s original covenant and promises pertained mainly to things of the present life: fruitfulness, an increase in numbers and in the length of days; peace, abundance, and prosperity; and how adherence to God’s exact laws was important. But Jesus, as our mediator, offers a new covenant based the pardon of sin and the promise of spiritual blessings, one that goes to the heart of things eternal. God comes to us where we are, based on what lessons we can learn and bear at any given time. Where is your faith? Is it based on checking the boxes and fulfilling the law or on Jesus’ redemptive promise?

Jan 25: *“Go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature.”*(Mk 16:15-18)

If you read the stories and prayers of St. Francis of Assisi, you know he took Jesus’ admonition to heart. All the earth and its creatures are precious. Proclaiming the Gospel means treating the earth, animals, and each other with dignity and respect. Take a look today at how you treat the entirety of God’s creation. Share some ideas on how each member of the family proclaims God’s love by the way they care for the earth.

Jan 26: *“... I remind you to stir into flame the gift of God that you have...”* (2 Tm 1:1-8)

I love this image... to stir into flame God’s gift. It speaks of gentle action, a gradual bringing forth of our giftedness into the world. It requires patience and constant tending. When and how the flame will spread is up to God. We care and nurture our gifts so when we are called, we will be ready to share our warmth and light with the world. What can you do today “to stir the gift of God that you have?”