**John 2:1-11 (ESV)**

On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. **2** Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples. **3** When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.” **4** And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come.” **5** His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.” **6** Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. **7** Jesus said to the servants, “Fill the jars with water.” And they filled them up to the brim. **8** And he said to them, “Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast.” So they took it. **9** When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom **10** and said to him, “Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now.” **11** This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.

**“Celebration of Life”**

Grace, mercy, and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ the Father’s Son, in truth and love. Amen (2 John 1:3). Last Sunday celebrated the miracle of Jesus’ baptism. The promise of new life by water and the Word comes to replace the old Adam. This Sunday we now face another miracle. It is the first Jesus performed in His public ministry. God still loves to celebrate His goodness even in a fallen creation. Jesus said, “ The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds” (Matthew 11:18-19). What a deed it was to change water into wine. Jesus was the life of the wedding at Cana.

Of course, in all the ways sin, death, and the Devil attack. Chief among them is the sanctity, holiness, and goodness of human life. It means to finally attack and degrade God. In our modern world, an explosion of issues has erupted. Abortion, bioethics, euthanasia, family living, fatherlessness, homosexuality, and sexual purity come to shroud life in darkness. All these things take away what we celebrate in our relationship with God and one another. Yet, the first miracle of Jesus uncovers the source of sanctity for human life in this world. Marriage is more than between a man and a woman. It is how God has established salvation by the Gospel, so sinners celebrate life by His Name.

The whole event for the first miracle at Cana sounds more like an afterthought then Christ being the center of attention. “On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples.” Marriage does stand out in life. It is the most precious relationship God established in this world. He gave it to Adam and Even in the garden at the beginning of creation. As Genesis records, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed” (Genesis 2:24-25). It did not take long for the Devil to tear apart the only perfect marriage. Even still, our first parents kept together after The Fall was a great miracle. This happened because God vowed to send a Savior more sacred than wedding vows.

Celebration of life means God gives what none deserves to shame the devil. The sinful nature demands isolation from God and love for others. A relationship between a husband or wife is an unnatural event God brings together. This bond of marriage is an all or nothing exchange of life. As is said, “for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish” until death. This shames the Devil and is why Jesus showed up to the wedding at Cana. St. Augustine states, “Is it any wonder that he who came to that house for a wedding came to this world for a wedding?… Therefore Jesus has a bride here whom he has redeemed by his blood and to whom he has given the Holy Spirit as a pledge.” The invitation from God shows more than marriage being good. Attention is now on the bond of baptism created between Christ and His Church. This relationship is an exchange of life that none deserves, but God gladly shames the Devil by the presence of His Son.

As much as the wedding was a great event, there always seems to be trouble. For the couple at Cana it came by bad planning or from just being poor. Maybe they started to point the figure at each other pushing around the blame just like Adam and Eve. Maybe there was distress by the couple disappointed over the “perfect” picture of marriage. Only one turned to Christ for help. Only one was confident not in their works or who was to blame, but solely in faith to Jesus. Mary told him the problem at the wedding feast. And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come.” His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.” Mary knew the faithfulness of God to sinners. She bore Christ while married, yet still a virgin. What sounded like a negative answer from Jesus rested on a more promising Word. “For Zion’s sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not be quiet, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a burning torch.” Whatever Jesus said was going to be good for He was the Savior.

Celebration of life means God is faithful by His Word to comfort sinners. In order to continue the wedding or restore the broken bonds we need Jesus. It is not so much the water into wine that we are looking for but the Word at work in our lives. How much devastation with marriage, so much war between just two people, so much suffering that sees no end. Luther answers, “God’s Word shall do it, by which all things are made, preserved and transformed; that Word which turns your water into wine, and distasteful marriage into delight. That God has instituted marriage the heathen and unbelievers do not know, therefore their water remains water and never becomes wine” (House Postils Vol.1 2:57). Jesus is faithful to face the problems, the worst sins, and the saddest divisions. You want to trust feelings for a way out you will find yourself alone to self. You want to let reason run the show you will crush whatever love exists. The transformation of water in Jewish purification jars proves Jesus alone cleanses sinners, provides help for the helpless, and has the best wine to receive in the promise of His Word.

Plenty benefited from the blessed miracle brought forth by Jesus. What seemed to be the end turned out to be better than the beginning. The master of the feast told the bridegroom, “Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now.” I guess good things come to those who wait as the saying goes. Yet, the most glorified and blessed marriage cannot compare to what comes in Christ. Only the servants saw the true miracle at Cana. Those of low status at this wedding were the first to witness the revealing of God’s Son. What happened for a few would later be a blazing miracle for all. Jesus would say, “Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name” (John 12:27-28). The glory manifested for all by Jesus is to be the suffering Savior. This feast of victory He established is for His Church to eat and drink. It is His death as our proclamation of life, as sanctify of human life in Him.

Celebration of life means God leaves the best for last in order to silence death. As precious as it is to draw near to another by marriage, the loss of a spouse tears apart the one flesh union God made. No marriage has truly ever survived the test of time. The deepest relationship and love fades into the grave. This is why Jesus died, “…not just like another man but in such a way that by and in his death he conquered sin, death, and the Devil, hell, and eternal damnation” (Tappert 596:25). The best is last because there is one relationship that never falls short, never changes, or never fades for you. This is the love of God with righteousness silencing death standing upon the hope we have in Jesus. He established His marriage by the cross in order that by His resurrection there was something to say to the baptized, “And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20). Whatever the relationships in life Christ offers more for us on the Last Day. It is a marriage feast forever with Him. To be with all the saints in the glorified kingdom of His Church. This is how God has established salvation by the Gospel, so sinners celebrate life by His Name. Amen. Now may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting, Amen.