**John 2:1-11 January 16, 2022**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our text for this morning comes from our Gospel lesson, John chapter 2 here re-reading these words. “This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.” This is our text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I am not a man who would make it very long in a survisval situation, but I am fascinated with survival shows. My wife and I used to watch a show called dual survival where a rough and tough military expert was paired with his partner, a nature lover who wouldn’t wear shoes. The show would throw both of them out into the wild with very little and they would have to survive. While the two of them had different views and opinions on nature and survival they both agreed that their first priority was finding water. Even I can remember the simple truth of survival that you can survive weeks without food, but days without water. In snowy climates the two would have abundant water, they’d melt snow or ice. In the forest they’d find a stream or some other natural water source. In the desert they would show off their survival expertise by finding water in the least likely places, but no matter where the helicopter dropped them off, or where they found themselves they always immediately were looking for water.

It’s the same for us, even if we don’t recognize it and even if we take it for granted. Without water we can’t possibly survive therefore water equals our survival. But wine doesn’t. Wine is associated with merriment, happiness and celebration. We don’t drink wine to survive, we drink wine to enjoy fellowship with one another. We drink wine at parties and especially wedding receptions. Wine is associated with toasts and feasts, when you’re in a survival situation you aren’t thinking about wine, you aren’t thinking about barely making it through the world. When Jesus in our Gospel lesson changes water into wine he’s not doing so in order to save any of these people from death. This is not a miracle of desperation or salvation for anyone based on the fact that they now can drink wine instead of water.

Instead this miracle is more about what John records in verse of 11. “This was the first of Jesus signs, and He *manifested* his glory. And his disciples believed in him.” This miracle was a passing on of the spirit and of the faith that existed in the heart of Mary; Jesus’s mother, to the disciples, and even on to the servants who filled the jars and offered the wine to the master of the feast. It was a miracle that revealed his power to the bridegroom, the bride, the other guests, and anyone else who tasted the greatest tasting wine in the history of the world that was created through divine power. This was a revelation and enlightening of the true nature of Jesus Christ to everyone gathered. It was an epiphany in their minds and in their lives of a new power that had come to this world, who had the power to not only change water to wine, but ultimately to pay for sin and change death to life not only in his own body but in their hearts as well.

While we celebrate a wedding usually on one night during a reception and maybe the next day during a gift opening for the family and friends, a wedding at the time of Jesus was usually celebrated over the span of 7 days. This was a time of celebration and rejoicing where family and friends would take time off of work and would do nothing but feast and be happy. For the host to run out of wine this early would be a serious social mishap. Everyone expects wine at a wedding. Mary shows her faith and understanding that Jesus can fix this problem by coming to Jesus and simply saying “They have no wine.” It is a prayer that is simple and straightforward; going to God in prayer and stating a simple fact. “God I have cancer.” “God I’m out of money and my bills are due.” “God I need to get an A in this class or else I will fail.”

We shouldn’t for a second believe that God doesn’t already know our requests, just as Jesus wasn’t ignorant of the fact that they had run out of wine. Christ’s rebuttal of Mary’s statement isn’t done to harass his mother, but simply to point to the fact that the time of his death and resurrection had not yet come. But despite what he’s said, Mary still tells the servants to “Do whatever he tells you” showing her faith that Christ was able to accomplish this and would manifest his glory in order to create faith in the hearts of his disciples. While he doesn’t perform this miracle for the survival of the physical body of the guests at this wedding feast, he does perform it for the creation of faith that will save the souls of the men who were following him. That’s where the balance is, and the revelation of this amazing miracle in the epiphany season. Christ takes the Church from the promise of an old covenant, that was focused on the survival of mankind after the fall into sin, to the revelation of the new covenant, of himself as the Redeemer of the world, and the one who would take us, his people, from the water of survival, to the wine of celebration.

We come to God today as beggars seeking water in our prayers and requests throughout the week. Think of the prayers that undoubtedly went up to God this past week asking him to grant them a winning lottery ticket so that they could pay off bills, provide for the needs of the world, or even to just enjoy a life of luxury here on earth. We pray to God in desperation to survive at all times in our lives, when we’re driving, working, sitting in a hospital bed, staring at a computer screen, feeling pain in our bodies and our hearts, seeing the pain on the face of a loved one, wanting to fix the problems that sin has created in this world but despairing in the fact that we are incapable of taking it all away. Especially in the midst of an ongoing pandemic, we turn to God and pray for relief, for healing, for safety, peace, comfort, and an end to the ongoing struggles and sickness of our world. And God hears our prayers, and answers our prayers with a yes, a no, or a not at this time. His divine wisdom and Will guides our lives.

But do we see his glory manifested in the miracles he works every day in our lives, as he reveals himself to us in the miracle of his love that provides for all of our needs? Do we believe in him based on the amazing love that we receive when he answers our prayers and blesses us even when he may say no or not at this time? Or instead do we focus on ourselves? Do we change our prayers to accusations against God for the things he did not give us? Do we fail to see his glory and instead only dwell on the desperation of a world that is infected with worse than Covid, but actually infected with sin?

It is easy for us in our lives to give in to the temptation of despair in our world and only focus on survival. To isolate ourselves from everyone else and only seek the water to survive rather than the wine to celebrate. But God has not called us to be in sadness and desperation, but instead he has invited us to the heavenly banquet of victory over sin, death, and the grave. As our Introit reminds us, “The Lord brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love.” We all at one time lived in the desperation of sin and the hope of water for survival, but through the waters of Holy Baptism our sin was washed away. The water of Holy Baptism is the path forward in our own lives of seeing in our future the wine of salvation, the wine that is greater than even the wine that was created in Cana, because it wasn’t about the taste of this wine, but what it is. In the bread and wine of Holy Communion we receive the needed salvation of our souls. Rather than focusing on the needs of our body, this meal is the connection to us and the death of Jesus Christ, and the wine that we receive is the very blood of our Savior. A Savior who loved us so much he gave his own life for us, and who performed a greater sign than turning water into wine, when he rose from the dead and gave us eternal life. We too have moved from water to wine, through God’s Holy Sacraments, from adoption into God’s house as his own children and a creation of a new heart in place of a heart of desperation and sin through Holy Baptism.

We are God’s redeemed, His beloved, his children. When you’re on your own you’re focused on survival, like an orphaned child who is thrown out into the streets and has to focus only on what they can find, a homeless nomad who is constantly wondering and hoping how they will find water, food, and shelter in order to survive. That is not our lives, but that desperation is an easy temptation in our church today. To focus only on the negatives, to see only what we don’t have, and to cling to any source of survival. To put aside the wine of celebration in a concern that we won’t be able to afford the means to survive. My dear friends, if God is for us, who can be against us? If you are God’s child, how will he not provide for your needs? And if God has given us so much and provided for us, as we look at our congregation even in the midst of so much despair in our world today, and so many challenges, how can we not give thanks to God for all of these gifts and trust in Him, leaning not on our own understanding or meticulous micromanagement of His gifts, but rather to let God lead, to let God’s Will be done, and instead to serve the Lord in gladness, not in an anxious worry, but in celebration for his many gifts. Gifts of water for our bodies, and wine for our souls. Don’t worry, give thanks, and even in your faith and in the life you have to look forward to for all eternity with Christ your Savior, even take the time to celebrate.

Amen.

The peace of God which surpasses all human understanding keep our hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.