

Epiphany 2 (2025)

A former minister at the Blue Ridge Methodist Church, Glenn Etheridge, now sadly deceased, once told me that he preferred funerals to weddings.

“At least the emotions are real,” he explained.

After over 30 years as a clergyman and having performed many of both, I get his point, but I can't say I agree entirely.

There is a lot 'flutter' at many weddings. Not only do you have to deal with the bride, the groom, the florist and photographer . . . there is *the mother of the bride*. You don't want to cross her!

And things don't always go as planned.

On one occasion here at St. Luke's, the door to the room where the bridesmaids' matching shoes had been placed got locked by mistake, and no one had a key. It was minutes away from 'showtime', and I had to body-slam the door so that there would be no delay.

On another, it was showtime and there was no groom.

As it turned out, his mother had got him drunk the night before and had tried to kidnap him so he would not go through with the wedding. You can't make this stuff up!

To finish the story, he did finally appear, but only after I had dismissed everyone to the reception. At this point, we regathered, and the wedding was solemnized . . . and the last I heard the two are still happily married.

Thankfully, however, most weddings go off without a hitch. More than that, they are special

moments of grace. To quote Father Abram Ryan, “Poet Priest of the South”:

*“On the human love fell the heavenly grace,
Making two hearts forever one.”*

Undoubtably this was the case with the wedding told about in this morning’s Gospel, the wedding of Cana. Yet even here there were some chilly moments. At what we would call the reception, the family ran out of wine.

From our point a view, it might not seem like a big deal. So what if the guests had to go home after two drinks rather than three or four or more?

Yet, in that culture, it was a big deal. The late Merrill Tenney, a long-time professor of New Testament and Greek at Wheaton College, explains:

“To fail in providing adequately for the guests would involve social disgrace. In the closely knit communities of Jesus’ day such an error would never be forgotten, and would haunt the newly married couple all their lives.”

Thank goodness Jesus was there. To paraphrase an old Coke jingle: **Things go better with Jesus!**

A practical lesson we might learn from the wedding of Cana is to actively invite Jesus to all our events and parties.

If you find the thought of His presence uncomfortable, you should probably not have such a party or to go to such a party.

That reminds me . . . Before St. Luke’s had a building of its own and we were meeting in the old Blue Ridge City Hall, I would often set up the room on Saturday. On one occasion, I did so

without knowing that a group of ladies were coming in later that day for a bridal shower.

After I got back home the telephone rang. A city official was on the line.

“Can you please come and take down the cross. There are women here who say they want to tell dirty jokes and don’t feel comfortable doing so in front of the cross.”

I had to laugh. Cross or no cross, Jesus was present.

How much better it is not only to realize this, but to invite Him to all social events.

As we have seen in today’s Gospel, He comes not to be a killjoy, but to be the life of the party . . . the One who makes everything go better.

In the case of the wedding of Cana, His presence made the difference between a memorable event and one that would have haunted the family for life.

But there is much more here than a one-of-great miracle which saved a family's honour.

This miracle was the first of seven miracles or signs recorded in John's Gospel. All were put down for the self-same purpose: so that people might discover who Jesus is.

John reveals His hand near the end of his Gospel, when he says:

“... these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name” (John 20:31).

Have you discovered who Jesus is and His relevance in your life? If not, let this gospel

account guide you. Again, life goes better with Jesus. He is not a cosmic killjoy but the One who came to give life, life to the full. Let Him turn water into wine in your life.

But even if you are a long-time believer, why not let this account lead you to greater understanding and fuller faith?

That is exactly what seems to have happened with Jesus' disciples that day. In verse 11, we read: **[Jesus] “manifested forth his glory; /// and his disciples believed on him.”**

No doubt, they had already ‘believed’, after all they were following Him, but when they saw what He did that day, their faith was confirmed and strengthened. Their eyes were stretched even wider. It was for them an epiphany moment.

At that village wedding they saw their friend and teacher do what only God Almighty could do. Let me explain.

First, they saw Him exercising control over the created order.

In the beginning God set in motion an order which included: sunshine and rain, seedtime and harvest.

In the case of wine, water which fell from above was taken up into grape vines, which derived their strength and vitality from the sun.

The moisture absorbed through the roots of these plants eventually became the juice found in the berries. Then, through the process of fermentation, also a part of God's order, that juice was transformed into wine, which, according to the Psalmist 'makes glad the heart of man'.

C.S. Lewis in his book *Miracles* suggests that in the miracle of Cana this process was not put aside, but sped up.

What under normal circumstances would have taken weeks and months happened in a span of a few moments.

When Jesus' disciples saw this, they must have sensed that they had in their midst Someone greater than a prophet. The God of creation had come among them.

We also find in this account Jesus doing something else the Almighty does: He provides just as the God of the Hebrew had provided in the days of old.

When, for example, the children of Israel, during their trek to the Promised Land, had nothing to drink and were perishing, God provided water from a rock, and, later still,

when they lacked food, He sent manna, bread from heaven.

What does Jesus do at the wedding at Cana?
/// He does what He sees His Father do. He provides. This time wine, and lots of it . . . over 100 gallons. More than that it is of the highest quality. No Gallo in a box!

A prophet, but more than a prophet. That is who Jesus is.

The final and greatest act of providing comes at the end of His life when He dies for the sins of His people . . . yes, for your sins and my sins. In so doing, the old account of human failure was settled once and for all.

“For he [God] has made Him [Jesus] to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him,”
writes Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:21. A glorious thought and truth.

The miracle in today's Gospel anticipates this great future event. This is Jesus' 'hour' to which He alludes in today's passage.

But there is a present aspect to what we see Jesus doing in Cana.

Our triune God still provides. To quote an old American hymn:

Be not dismayed whate'er betide
God will take care of you
Beneath His wings of love abide
God will take care of you

As I prepare to close, let me ask:

What are some of *your* needs this morning?

Are you concerned about a sick loved one?

Do you have a family situation too big for you to handle on your own?

Is your wine cupboard bare?

Do you need wisdom concerning some decision you are being called upon to make?

Whatever it is, there is no need so small or so large that we cannot bring it to the divine throne room and leave it there.

Let Jesus, the Son of God, turn water into wine in your life.

Turn the ordinary into the extraordinary.

Make the dull and mundane sparkle like champagne when the cork is popped.