

## **Epiphany 2, 2018**

“This beginning of signs did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory, and His disciples believed on Him. (St. John 2.11)

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

In this morning’s Gospel we are told the details of Jesus’ first miracle. Basically, during a wedding banquet in the village of Cana in the district of Galilee, the supply of wine ran out. So, Jesus told the servants to refill six, large pots with water. Upon their arrival, the guests had used water from these to wash their hands. After they had all been filled (with approximately 20-30 gallons each), the Lord told the servants to ladle some water out and take it to the governor of the feast. By the time, they reached him, the water had been turned into a very good wine – better than the wine initially served at the banquet.

Some important points for us include the fact that this wedding was the occasion Jesus chose for His first miracle. Secondly, His miracle involved a complete transformation: water was made into wine. Thirdly, He created an abundant supply. Lastly, we are told that “Jesus manifested forth His glory, and His disciples believed on Him”.

In all my readings of this Gospel in the past, I have not given much thought to the connection between the transformation, the abundant supply and God’s glory. According to the Gospel, Jesus manifested forth His glory through this miracle; and these details are what actually made the miracle: the transformation and the abundant supply. So then, God’s glory – His majesty; His magnificence; His absolute perfection – was shown in the first effect of the abundant supply of wine; and in the secondary effect of enriching this couple’s marriage. He increased the experience of their celebration and relieved a burden or potential embarrassment. And, in all of that He showed God’s majesty and absolute perfection, the disciples believed.

In a similar way, today’s Epistle speaks about enriching or lifting up the lives of others. Carrying on at verse six of Romans, chapter 12 – at the place where last week’s reading left off -- St. Paul goes into detail about the gifts of the Holy Spirit. And, after listing seven of them, he emphasizes the necessity of being kind to one

another with brotherly love; out do one another in showing honour; be given to hospitality; contribute to the needs of saints (other Christians); bless those who persecute you – bless them and do not curse them; live in harmony with one another. Do not be arrogant but associate with the poor and those who are in need. In each of these phrases and directives, he is very specific about increasing the other person's joy and enriching their life in some small way. On the one hand, we are to use our gifts to build up the Church, the Body of Christ; on the other hand, our faith, hope and charity are to be outward looking, beyond the safe walls of our building. The mission we've received from the Lord is 'both –and' not 'either –or'. With every opportunity, we are to advance the glory of God.

That phrase – 'to advance the glory of God' – was used by Archbishop Thomas Cranmer in a sermon he preached called 'The Homily of Salvation'. In it, he said:

“Consider the infinite benefits God has mercifully shown without our deserving them. He created us out of nothing and from His infinite goodness. Out of common clay He formed us in His own image. Moreover, even when because of our sins we were condemned to eternal punishment, He gave His only begotten Son...to become incarnate among us, to take our infirmities upon Himself. In a full humanity like ours, Christ willingly suffered the most shameful and painful death for our sins. He did this to justify us and restore us to life everlasting. He made us to be beloved children, brethren to His only Son, our Saviour, and inheritors of His eternal kingdom.

“These great and merciful benefits do not prompt us to be idle, but they move us to present ourselves to God completely, to serve Him in all good deeds, obeying His commandments, and seeking in all things to glorify Him. God's benefits move us for His sake to be ready to give ourselves to our neighbours and as much as is within our power to do good to all persons. These are the fruits of the true faith, to do good to all and, above all things and in all things, to advance the glory of God, from Whom alone we have our sanctification, justification, salvation, and redemption”.

“These are the fruits of the true faith,” he said “to do good to all and, above all things, and in all things, to advance the glory of God”. As I hear that, it really condenses what the Lord Jesus did at that wedding reception. He advanced the glory of God by turning the water into wine. He blessed that couple with

something they needed; and without saying a word, He showed them and us what God yearns to do. He yearns to change us from water into wine; from sinners into saints; from lost to found; from death to life; from the children of Adam and Eve to the children of God; from those who were in darkness to those who have been brought into His glorious Light.

It is important to note that Jesus' first miracle was performed at a wedding. That occasion, by itself, emphasizes that He came to take His own bride, the Church – to save her and purify her and to lift her up, that she might be His forever. This “great and merciful benefit,” as Cranmer said “does not prompt us to be idle, but moves us to present ourselves to God completely, to serve Him in all good deeds, obeying His commandments, and seeking in all things to glorify Him”.

So, both the Gospel and the Epistle today set before us these two questions: ‘How can the Church advance God’s glory in our current culture?’ ‘How can we, as the Body of Christ, enrich the lives of others both physically AND spiritually in ways that they will see Christ, and the beauty and perfection of God?’ The other question is similar: ‘How can I, as the child of God, and a member of Christ, advance the Lord’s glory?’ ‘Who, in my circle of friends, is in need right now? How can I enrich their life? How can I show my love and support for them?’ A phone call. A card to say we are praying. A little visit. These are offerings we can make to advance the beauty and perfection of God. Why? Because it is only in Him that we have peace and salvation. It is only in His perfect righteousness that this world will find the justice it craves. It is only In God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit that people will discover the satisfaction and happiness they seek.

When the ‘multitude of the heavenly host’ appeared with the angel of the Lord to the shepherds on the night of Christ’s birth, they said, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men”. And so it is true: within that heavenly glory we shall find peace and good will. Not apart from it; but within it. Within God’s glory there is Truth and Grace; there is forgiveness and everlasting Love; there is complete transformation from water to wine; an eternal Hope; and abundant Life.

And now unto God Almighty: the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost...