

“Transformation”

Who doesn't love a good wedding? It usually entails a good party for a celebration that a man and a woman have decided to spend their lives together. According to custom, the wedding festivities in Jesus' time, always began on Monday, and lasted seven days. How would you like to be the caterer for that? The guests ate, reclining on floor mats and, in the course of the celebration, consumed large quantities of food and wine. There was rhythmic music and lively dancing. In our Gospel account, as the party raged on, the hosts ran out of wine, causing them great embarrassment. Please open your Pew Bibles to page 1649, John chapter 2. *"On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding."* (John 2:1-2)

Interestingly enough, there are two places in the Galilee which have been identified as the village of Cana where Jesus performed the miracles of turning water into wine at a wedding feast and healing the official's son. Both are very near Nazareth, where Jesus grew up. Unfortunately, there is no one from that time that we can ask! It was from the town of Cana that Nathanael ("Bar Tolome" "son of Tolome" or Bartholomew) came, and it was he who initially rejected Jesus when they met. Let's look on the page before our Gospel – to chapter 1:46 in which He said *"Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?"* (John 1:46) Now let's continue to the top of page 1649 and verse 48 when Jesus speaks to Nathaniel and specifically identifies him. Nathaniel asks Jesus *"How do you know me?"* Jesus answered, *"I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you. Then Nathanael declared, 'Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel.'" (John 1:48-49)* This is so important because Nathaniel realized that Jesus knew him without being introduced to him was tremendous. He later became one of Jesus' Apostles and he was also present when the risen Christ appeared to the disciples and made them breakfast *"by the Sea of Tiberias"* (John 21:2) the Sea of Galilee.

This wedding site, which visited every year by thousands of pilgrims, is called *"Kaf'r Kana"*, and is just to the northeast of Nazareth, where Jesus grew up, and Mary lived. A very sweet wine is sold there and is labeled "Wine from Cana," and it reflects the tradition of the marriage feast. Many people buy this wine in remembrance of Jesus' first recorded miracle. Some friends of ours from Niagara Falls, Gino and Muriel, bought this wine and brought it back with them for their 50th wedding renewal of vows. It was sugary sweet! I did not care for it. But they wanted the wine from Cana to be used for the service. It was a wonderful thought, but too sweet. I much prefer the Port that we use. But, when Jesus makes wine – no one is going to complain!

The wedding itself probably would have involved the whole village, and as we read, there were people from neighboring ones too; which is why Mary, her Son and his friends were invited. Running out of wine was not only inconvenient, but it would be a total social disaster and disgrace. It would have been as if at our annual meeting today that we ran out of chicken! You know that is NOT going to happen. That family would have to live with the shame of it for a long time to come; I would venture to say that the bride and groom might see it as bringing

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misfortune on their married life. Throughout the Gospels after this event Jesus will address other kinds of problems and needs, but here we are witnessing the true compassion of our Savior, a compassion which comes where people are in need and Jesus deals with that need in an unexpected way. The transformation from water to wine signifies the effect that Jesus can have, can still have today, on people's lives. We know, through Jesus' life that He came that believers might have life in all its fullness and abundance. (John 10:10)

With the custom of the wedding lasting seven days – can you just imagine the huge amounts of food and wine consumed? There was concern for the hosts – that running out of wine would be a “black eye” upon them. That is why Mary, Jesus' mother, asks for and I get the sense that she insisted on His help. She insists and is not going to let Him away without helping. Jesus tells her in John 2:4 *"Dear woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My time has not yet come."*

Mary, Jesus' mother knows better than to argue with God, she simply tells the servants *"Do whatever he tells you."* (John 2:5) She knows that His power is going to be demonstrated; she doesn't know how or why, and I think it is interesting for us to know that as Jesus tells them to go and fill the jars, He doesn't touch them - that is the power that He has! Some people, on the History Channel (we all check out the History Channel from time to time to see things that are going on, but you cannot always trust what is on there)(Fr. John holds up the Bible and says “this is our history channel – you can trust what is in here.) There are people who bill themselves as experts of the Bible – one such “expert” is John Dominic Crossan, a former Roman Catholic priest, who indicated that Mary didn't really know that Jesus was God or that He could perform miracles. The words from Mary speak otherwise! Do you think she would tell these servants to *"do whatever He tells you"* if she didn't KNOW who Jesus was, and the power that was contained with simply a word, or what Jesus could do? Those same “experts” have also shared their doubts that Jesus knew who He was! Even some of the dramatic presentations like “Jesus” that was a miniseries on CBS many years ago had Jesus asking John the Baptist *"why do you say that?"* in answer to when He was called the *"Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world."* Again, be careful what you watch, and be sure to check it with the Bible. Jesus exhibits two things here in this Gospel reading: one and most importantly, is obedience to His mother's wishes. He was a good Jewish boy, you don't cross a Jewish “Momma!” Two is compassion for people in need. What happens next is evidence of both.

Let's look at verses 6-10 *"Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons." "Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim." "Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." They did so," "and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside" "and said, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper*

wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now." (John 2:6-10)

The transformation from water to wine shows us the effect that Jesus can have (and still has today) on people's lives. Mary's faith and the obedience of the servants allow each of us to see the faith that is necessary for miracles and transformations to take place in our own lives.

What was it that I said at the beginning of the service, at the announcements? That all are welcome here at St. Andrew's Anglican Church, and second of all – let's be ready for whatever God is going to do in our lives. Be ready for transformation! You know, I have said many times "God loves you just the way you are – BUT – He loves you too much to leave you that way!" Very important!

Verse 11 gives us more: "*This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.*" (John 2:11) They put their faith in Him, they had seen that this was a Man who not only walked the walk, but He walked the talk. What He said – He did!

There is a moment of hesitation after Mary's impassioned plea to her Son, Jesus. During that brief moment Mary looks into her son's face and sees a decidedly different man than the one who has lived with her and who she cared for her the last thirty years. Let us just look back at what has happened to Jesus: if you recall, last week was the Baptism of Jesus. After Jesus was baptized, near Jericho, He went into the wilderness for forty days and forty nights. He was tempted by the devil, and He did not sin. After that, He returned to the Galilee region and started to call His disciples. Then He returned to Nazareth, and as we read today He was invited to a wedding feast. The man that Mary looked at bears chiseled sculpting from his forty days in the wilderness, after His Baptism in the Jordan. He is leaner now, more serious, and much more intense. Jesus hesitates because He knows that if He meets this need by "supernatural means," His life will never be the same. No, after this one wedding, the small-town seclusion of His life would be behind Him forever. For the next three and a half years, His only time alone to Himself would be moments that He would get away in an olive grove before dawn or brief moments of quiet that He could steal away on a barren hillside after dark. Fellowship with His Father would come only at the expense of His sleep, because the needs of the people were so great!

I am sure Jesus thought about the embarrassment this couple would experience would be no way to start a honeymoon, let alone a new life together in that community. You see when people got married, they didn't build a house or go move away, but they built onto the father's house. And so, the Father's house had many rooms: sound familiar? They needed help. Jesus was compassionate and so without a word from His lips, without a touch from His hand, Jesus simply wills the water to become wine.

The way Jesus revealed His glory—with a quiet miracle; there was no fanfare, just the mighty hand of God working silently behind the scenes in an hour of need. The purpose of this miracle

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was performed not to quench His own thirst, but to satisfy the needs of others. The unveiling of the glory of God must have enlarged the disciples' faith. Can you imagine them watching this take place? They would see so much more in the next three years. I pray that this miracle would touch our hearts today, that Our Lord knows our needs, and awaits our seeking His glory and mercy.