

SERMON: "JESUS AT A PARTY"

**TEXTS: OLD TESTAMENT
NEW TESTAMENT**

**ISAIAH 62:1-5
JOHN 2:1-11**

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INTRODUCTION

One of the things I learned early on in my ministry is something about weddings
I've been to quite a few weddings, most of the time as the pastor
I've seen it often enough – that mix of building anxiety (what else needs to be done
and done just right) coupled with sheer joy, lots of love all around
It's quite the mix ... a creative tension you might say

I've learned as the pastor to speak to that mix both in pre-marital counseling
and especially at the rehearsal and just before the service. I tell the couple
(and often the whole wedding party) ... "Something will go wrong, not according
to your well-made plans. Don't worry about it. It will go unnoticed
by almost everyone here. Or it will be cute and make for a good story later"

Can you think of any wedding stories? There is one in the bible, in John
Jesus went to a party, a wedding party where they almost ran out of wine
People certainly would have noticed that. But that problem was handled
in a way that largely went un-noticed with a behind the scenes kind of miracle

The biblical story told about Jesus at a wedding, what exactly is it really about?
There is no mention of the service itself, no mention of the couple
No mention of any words from Jesus about marriage

The story is about what Jesus did at that wedding. He turned water into wine
And it is about what John, the author, says about it. John tells the story,
a bit about what Jesus did, why he did it (his mother plays a key role)
and how he does it (he involves the servers in the process)
Then he offers a summary

**Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee,
and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.**

I've heard (and preached) several sermons on this passage
Sermons about weddings
Jesus blesses marriage by his presence here. I've said that at many a wedding.
Sermons about wine
Jesus not only drank wine. He made more wine, better wine

SEEING THE SIGNS

That said, I repeat what I've said before. I don't think John tells this story to talk about wine or weddings. John, with that summary about this being Jesus' first sign, tells us why he tells this story – to introduce Jesus and his work

This story is not about weddings or wine. It is about signs
John wants us to know that this is "the first of Jesus' signs"
That Jesus revealed his glory and that the disciples believed

Upon hearing this story, might we do the same?
See the signs (in things big and small), see Jesus' glory revealed
and then believe, believe enough to follow

This is where I'd like us to spend our time together this morning in this passage
And not just this morning, but daily, weekly, monthly, yearly – all the time
I am becoming more and more convinced that following Jesus
is about being on the lookout for signs showing us where God is at work
Remember all the orange cones we had around the church? God at work!

This is the first of Jesus signs in John's gospel, the first of seven
The signs start small with Jesus keeping the wedding party going, kicking it up
a notch even (with better wine). Then he moves on to bigger and better
There will be three healing stories, the feeding of the 5000
Jesus walking on water and the raising of Lazarus.

It seems to me the way John tells the story is to build toward the biggest sign
of who Jesus is and what he came here to do – his own resurrection
Makes sense looking at the book as a whole. Yes, the one who rose from the dead
is the one who raised Lazarus, who walked on water, who fed 5000
who healed the man born blind, the man at the pool and the nobleman's son

Oh, and he turned water into wine at a wedding party.
Not many people would have remembered that one
Not everything at a wedding goes according to plan
But then most people don't even notice those things

This sign is one of those things. It is not a big show or spectacle
We're not sure really how to picture what happened that day in Cana
I do think it is safe to say it probably looked more like the image
on the screen ... and not so much like the one on the bulleting cover

I really like how Brian Peterson, a professor at a Lutheran seminary in SC
highlights how this sign isn't really a highlight, it's actually done rather quietly.

NOT ABOUT THE MARKETING

He writes in his article on Working Preacher ...

The act of Jesus is surprisingly underplayed. There is no recounting of Jesus placing his hands over the jars of water and praying for a transformation into wine. The change is mentioned almost in passing in verse 9, so that it may even surprise the first-time reader. It is a striking de-centering of the "miracle." The result is not that the wedding is filled with marveling crowds but that the disciples believe in Jesus (verse 11). The event has become, for them, the first "sign," a revelation of Jesus' glory. This glory is not simply equated with the power to do miracles. Rather, as a sign this event points beyond itself to the deeper reality of just who Jesus is.

Jesus is revealed in signs that might be big. Things easy to notice

Did you hear about Martha and Mary's brother being brought back from the dead?
Jesus is also at work and his glory revealed in things that may go unnoticed

I find that quite comforting. Everything God is doing in this world, in our lives, doesn't have to be a big to do or a big 'tah dah.' Jesus is at work here keeping the party going helping his mother (and the hosts and the couple)
It is the important work of hospitality done with some discretion

You've probably noticed that about Jesus' miracles ...

It is not really about the spectacle at all, not about the showmanship
It is about the good that is done – helping people, healing people, feeding people
Jesus miracles aren't so much about the marketing

A handful of my fraternity brothers, all in the school of business like me

(I was an Economics major) decided they would 'enhance' their resumes
by listing their work with the Society for the Advancement of Marketing (SAM)
They were all officers in this group. Looked good on paper
One problem though. They just made it up. No such thing. No SAM

So much of our world these days is about marketing

About a name ... Name recognition, name in lights, NIL – name, image and likeness
and about likes ... likes on social media.

I wonder how many likes Jesus of Nazareth would get if the resurrected Lord
start posting on social media ... Think Sermon of the Mount on the socials

Ok. I'm not going to speculate on that. Instead I think it wise to be on the lookout,
to see the signs in things that might go unnoticed
I think it wise to be open to what God is doing

SUMMARY

Jesus is very much on the loose and at work in this world.

He doesn't need marketing of made up things put on a resume

He doesn't need spectacle or special effects ... or splash

He is at work in this world in lots of ways

Jesus is on the loose. And up to some good, including good trouble

You may come across him most anywhere

You might run into him at a party.