

John 2:1-11 + Christ Revealed—Our Almighty Savior + 2nd Sunday after Epiphany + 17 January 2016

What gets your attention better—a quiet whisper or a loud shout? What captures your imagination better—the refined performance of a skilled actor or the explosive special effects of a summer blockbuster? What makes a better impression—a subtle action carried out with simple expressions and words or an obvious, in-your-face sign that screams “Pay attention!”?

We live in an age that seems to have lost an appreciation for the beauty of the subtle, the quiet, the understated, the simple. We go along with the crowds in thinking that the loud, the explosive, or the obvious are what is best. If I just scream loud enough or complain long enough or rant obnoxiously enough whether in real life or on social media, then people will listen to me...or so I think. The music I listen to, the games I play, the shows and movies I watch have to be loud and big and obvious. Yet I often miss what is most beautiful, most profound, or most amazing because I miss the subtle. We ignore the quiet. The understated disappoints us and the simple bores us. We have no sense of that in this loud, obvious age.

So it should come as no surprise if you or I find ourselves rather disappointed with the way Christ first revealed himself as our almighty Savior. It's all so simple, so subtle, so ordinary, even boring! There's nothing obvious or impressive or explosive about it. You might even say there are more questions than answers about this account. It's certainly not the way that you or I would write the script for Christ to be revealed!

It all happened in an ordinary, little town at an ordinary wedding celebration for an ordinary couple. Everyone expected there to be plenty of celebration and joy and feasting. After all, that's what you do at a wedding. Yet in the midst of all that ordinary celebration, Jesus did something special. Christ **“revealed his glory”** as our almighty Savior.

An ordinary Jewish couple was getting married in their hometown of Cana. It was a small village in the northern region of Galilee—about halfway between the Sea of Galilee and the Mediterranean Sea. From what we can tell, they didn't seem to have much and may have even been quite poor, but one thing is certain. As they are today, Jewish weddings back then were pretty expensive.

Wedding back in Jesus' day were a little different than today though. Instead of booking a banquet hall for a wedding reception and dance lasting hours at most, a Jewish wedding celebration started with a long procession of friends and family from the bride's home to the groom's. Then they celebrated for up to a week at the groom's home. For such a celebration, the couple had to make sure there was enough food and wine to last up to a week for their guests. Wine was part of most meals, usually in a watered-down form, because water wasn't always easy to get or was often undrinkable.

Jesus and his mother Mary were guests invited to the celebration. Just three days earlier Jesus' had called his first disciples to follow him. There were probably about six of them at that point. They too were invited to the wedding. Mary may have also had some other responsibilities at the wedding perhaps even overseeing some of the work with the servants.

Nonetheless, the celebration went on as you would expect. There was good food and drink and much joyous celebration, but then a problem popped up...a big problem. Mary came over to her son and told him, **“They have no more wine.”** Now you might wonder why that's a big deal. Why not run out and buy some more? Why bother telling Jesus about an oversight in the food planning? Well, they couldn't just run to the local market and buy some cheap wine. They were in a little village with limited resources and limited funds.

Even more importantly, though, the newly married couple could face some serious embarrassment if they ran out of wine before the celebration was over. After all, wine was a staple. What were they going to do? Would they have to send their guests home early? Would this embarrassing episode ruin their reputation in a society that considered hospitality one of the highest virtues, even before their marriage could get off the ground? Mary wanted to help them and she knew her son could do something about it.

Jesus was no wine distributor and didn't own vineyards in Galilee. He was a rabbi, a teacher of God's Word, but Mary's son was no ordinary teacher. In fact, he wasn't even an ordinary human being because Jesus could perform miracles. Mary's son was also the almighty Son of God come to be the Savior of the world. So Mary told her son, **“They don't have any wine.”**

Mary knew that her son was all-powerful. She knew he was **“the Son of the Most High.”** (Luke 1:32) Perhaps she recalled how the angel Gabriel had told her to tell her about the coming of her son or how the shepherds had come running to the stable where she gave birth to her son or how Simeon and Anna rejoiced at seeing

her son or how the Magi had worshiped her son. In bringing this embarrassing blunder to her son, Mary expected Jesus to perform a miracle and fix everything. She was trying to fill an immediate need, and perhaps for a moment, she also forgot that Jesus was more than just her son.

It certainly seems that way when Jesus responds to his mother. ***“What has this concern of yours to do with me, woman?”*** Now Jesus wasn’t being disrespectful, but he does give his mother a gentle rebuke. “Why do you involve me? You and I are coming at this differently. You want me to take care of this immediate need and prevent the embarrassment of our friends, but I’m here to save people from their sins and to reveal my glory to strengthen the faith of my disciples. ***My hour has not yet come.***” Jesus’ gentle rebuke got through. Mary believed her son and told the servants, ***“Do whatever he tells you.”*** So what did Jesus do?

In the back room, ***“six stone water jars had been set there for Jewish purification. Each contained 20 or 30 gallons.”*** For ceremonial purposes, the Jews washed their hands before and after eating. Then they washed all the dishes. That’s a lot of washing, so lots of water was needed. In this case, they had 120-180 gallons of available space. ***“Fill the jars with water,” Jesus told them. So they filled them to the brim. Then he said to them, “Now draw some out and take it to the chief servant.”*** So they did.

The servants took their samples to the chief servant, but ***“it had become wine.”*** He had no idea where it came from, but he couldn’t believe his taste buds. This was the best wine he had ever tasted. He called over the groom, ***“Everyone sets out the fine wine first, then, after people have drunk freely, the inferior. But you have kept the fine wine until now.”*** Normally, the best wine would come out first, but after a week of celebrating with people’s taste buds blunted with all the wine, cheaper, ***“inferior”*** wine would come out late in the celebration. This wine, however, was the finest the chief servant had ever tasted, and now everyone would enjoy it. The Apostle John adds a little note, ***“Jesus performed this first sign in Cana of Galilee. He revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him.”***

Jesus ***“revealed his glory”*** with this first miraculous sign in little Cana at an ordinary wedding celebration, but who noticed? Did Mary? She did know that her son had performed this amazing miracle—proving he was whom God said he was. How about the couple? Their potentially embarrassing social blunder was solved, but that’s about all they seem to get out of this. The chief servant? He was more impressed by the good wine at the end of the wedding than how this wine had come to be there. The guests? We don’t know if they even knew. The servants? They knew about the miracle happening, but Jesus ultimately revealed his glory for others.

Just days before Jesus had called his first six disciples—Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, and Nathanael. Jesus revealed his glory for them ***“and his disciples believed in him.”*** Jesus revealed his glory so they would see that he really was the Christ, the Messiah—God’s promised Savior. In a subtle, understated, and rather unimpressive way, Jesus revealed himself to be the holy God who created all things and yet the Savior who cares about ordinary people just like them. So his disciples trusted in him.

Living in this age that has lost an appreciation for the beauty of the subtle and the simple, you might miss what Jesus is doing here too. Yes, he transformed water into wine—over 100 gallons of it! Yet his miracle seems so unimpressive, even boring. Of all the ways to reveal his glory, why do it that way? He didn’t reveal it in the big city of Jerusalem or with crowds cheering. He didn’t stop the wedding celebration or cause a community so everyone could see him reveal his glory. He did it in little Cana in the back room without a wave of his hand with only Mary and the servants and the disciples knowing about it.

Like the couple or the guests or the chief servant we miss the subtle beauty of how Jesus revealed his glory. You may even feel a little disappointed that Jesus didn’t do something more impressive. Maybe you’re like Mary and forget who Jesus is, even though you know better, and expect him to fulfill your every “request” immediately or you forget that he cares about the ordinary and does the extraordinary day after day even for us.

You see, Jesus does reveal his glory week in and week out, day in and day out through ordinary, unimpressive, even boring means. Through ordinary words on the pages of Holy Scripture, Jesus reveals that he is your almighty Savior, that even in spite of your disappointment or self-centered ways, he still came to endure the cross and grave for your sins and also to be your living Savior victorious over the grave. Through ordinary water connected with those ordinary words in Holy Baptism, Jesus reveals his glory to make you his child through faith in him and to save you, giving you the eternal life that he won for you when his hour did come. Through ordinary bread and wine, Jesus reveals his glory as he gives you himself to forgive your sins, to strengthen your faith, and to assure you of eternal life.

In such subtle, simple, ordinary ways, Jesus reveals himself as our almighty God, who gave us life and guides all things for our eternal good, yet he is also the Savior who came to save ordinary sinners like you and me from guilt and death and hell. In this loud and obvious age, don't miss how Christ quietly reveals his glory for you because he is your almighty Savior. Amen.