

Epiphany III

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[0 : 00] The wedding at Cana, the gospel text we just heard from John chapter 2, is one of the most multifaceted stories in Scripture.

And I preached on this at least a dozen times, and there are so many different ways in expounding this text. We could talk about creation, new creation, marriage, the relationship of Jesus and his mother, the Holy Eucharist, and the list goes on.

But what I want us to see this morning is how this story connects with Moses and the Israelites. In Exodus chapter 7, we read about an extraordinary act of judgment by God upon Pharaoh and the Egyptians.

And I'm sure you know the story well. Pharaoh would not let God's people go free from their slavery. So the Lord used this prophet, Moses, to turn the waters in Egypt to blood.

We read in Exodus chapter 7, verse 19, And the Lord said to Moses, Say to Aaron, take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt, over the rivers, their canals, their ponds, and all their pools of water, so that they may become blood.

[1 : 37] And there shall be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, even in the vessels of wood and in the vessels of stone. The Lord turned the waters into blood as an act of judgment against his enemies for their rebellion.

Now contrast this frightening imagery with what we just heard here in our gospel text from John chapter 2. Jesus is at a wedding in Cana.

And suddenly, a rather embarrassing turn of events happens at this wedding feast. Our Lord's mother Mary informs our Lord that there is no more wine.

And Jesus responds by saying, Woman, what does your concern have to do with me? My hour has not yet come. Mary then tells the servants, Do whatever our Lord tells them.

There's a sense of urgency. There's a sense of panic. As the hosts at this wedding would be seen as woefully unprepared. And they would have been perceived as very inhospitable people.

[2 : 55] Which in the ancient world is a very big deal. They would have been seen as unprepared, as inhospitable, and allowing for this disaster to happen.

Jesus then has the servants fill six massive water pots that could hold 20 to 30 gallons each. And he takes this massive amount of water, probably around 120 to 150 gallons, and he turns it into wine.

And this is not just some cheap Merlot you buy at Kroger's. This was the very, very best wine.

Friends, Jesus is the fulfillment of a promise that is talked about throughout the Old Testament.

That new wine will drip from the holy place of God. Isaiah chapter 25 speaks of wine flowing from the mountain of God.

Jeremiah chapter 31 speaks of a new wine that will flow as the Lord will make Israel once again. A new covenant will be established in the hearts and in the minds of his people by the Holy Spirit.

[4 : 33] The prophet Joel speaks of this new wine in chapter 3, verse 18, where we read, And in that day the mountain shall drip with sweet wine.

And prophet Amos says in chapter 9, verse 13, The mountain shall drip with sweet wine and all the hills shall flow with it.

Jesus is the fulfillment of all this talk, this promise of new wine. Jesus came to bring life, not death. He came to bring new wine. Jesus came as the bridegroom for his people. And even though he's a guest at this wedding, all at once the focal point is on him.

He becomes the bridegroom. As a matter of fact, the names of the bride and bridegroom were never even given in John chapter 2. And his bride is not merely ethnic Israel.

[5 : 36] It's people from the north, the south, the east, and the west. All who look to him. And that is why he does his first miracle, by the way, in Jerusalem.

He does not do it in Jerusalem, I should say. He does not do it in the temple. His first miracle is not in the epicenter of the Israelite world.

It's done at Cana, the region of the Gentiles. Unlike Moses, Jesus did not turn the waters into blood. No, he came to impart life, not death. He came giving new wine. When our Lord responded to his mother as she informed him that there was no more wine, by saying, what does this have to do with me?

My hour has not yet come. He knew what awaited him. He knew that blood would flow. And that blood would flow from his veins.

[6 : 46] As the bridegroom would show the pinnacle, the pinnacle of love for his bride. How? How? He would lay down his own life.

He would lay down his own life. Jesus would demonstrate true love by acting selflessly and sacrificially for the sake of the world.

And what we, his bride, receive is not death. We receive life. The life of God through Jesus Christ. The life of God through his death. Through his blood. Earlier at the beginning of St. John's gospel, if we went back and read at the beginning, we would hear in chapter 1, verses 12 and 13, But as many as received him, that is Jesus Christ, to them he gave the right to become children of God. To those who believe in his name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And we go on to read in John chapter 1, verse 17, for the law was given through Moses.

[8 : 09] But grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. Jesus came to bring life. He came to bring new wine.

He came to be the bridegroom who has come for you, his bride. He did not come bringing judgment and death.

And we read in John chapter 3, verse 17, For God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.

Friends, Jesus came to give you life. To rescue you from death, from hell.

He came so that the blood he would spill from his own body would now become the new wine that we participate as he imparts now this new wine to you.

[9 : 17] His beloved and cherished bride. Amen. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.