

John 2:1-11  
17 January 2010

### "Wine???"

Epiphany season. Epiphany, you will remember, is a word that means "revelation." To "epiph" is to make known something that was previously hidden or unknown. Epiphanies in the Bible are revelations of God's presence and God's glory. They are usually associated with light, because where God's glory is, there is light.

So, God is revealed to Moses in the form of a burning bush. The birth of Jesus is revealed to shepherds who tremble in fear when an angel appears to them, and the glory of the LORD shines around them. And of course there is the Epiphany story of Wise Men being guided to the newborn King by a bright star shining in the darkness. At these Epiphanies the presence and glory of God are revealed.

And that brings us to this Second Sunday after Epiphany and the Gospel we just heard from John chapter 2, the story of the wedding at Cana. In the Gospel of John this is the first thing that happens after Jesus calls Peter and Andrew and the rest to be his disciples. In John the wedding at Cana is Jesus' coming out party, his Epiphany.

But it's a pretty strange Epiphany, isn't it? You might think that Jesus, now that he was ready to begin his work, had better things to do than to attend a wedding feast. This is not quite what we might expect. Only Mary seems to be expecting an Epiphany. Anyway, Jesus and his disciples are at this party. And there Jesus reveals his glory. Not in a burning bush or brilliant light from heaven but in the turning of water into wine.

Wine? Yes, wine. In the Gospel of John this is Jesus' first public act. Jesus' Epiphany and God's glory are revealed not in some supernatural or highly spiritual way but in a very earthly, material way. In the making of wine for a party. And not just any party but a wedding party. A party that celebrates the spiritual and the physical, sexual union of a man and woman.

Which brings me to the main point of this sermon. God is involved in and revealed in ordinary, earthly, physical things.

We have a tendency to compartmentalize our lives. There is the Sunday morning, spiritual compartment. This is where our religious beliefs and values and behavior go. We enter the Sunday morning world expecting to hear God's Word speak to us and expecting to see some Epiphany, some sign of God's presence among us.

And then there is the Monday morning, earthly, real world compartment. We have different expectations for this part of our lives. Since we live in a culture that relegates religious beliefs and values to a private matter, we do not expect to hear God speaking to us, and we do not expect any Epiphanies. And it's hard for us to see what the Sunday morning world has to do with the Monday morning world.

And then, I suppose, there is the Friday night compartment. A line from one of Bruce Hornsby's songs goes, "Get up on Sunday morning/ Repent for Friday night." And that pretty much sums it up.

And yet this Epiphany story in John chapter 2 takes place at one of those Friday night times. Jesus reveals his glory in the making of wine for a wedding feast.

I think most of us very much want to find a way to put our Sunday morning and our Monday morning--and even our Friday night--worlds together. Oh, there are a few who want affirmation and forgiveness on Sunday morning so they can do whatever they darn well please the rest of the week. But I don't think most Christians are like that at all. I think most Christians want to live their faith every day of the week. It's just that we have a hard time seeing the connection between Sunday morning and the rest of the week. We have compartmentalized our lives and have separated the spiritual from the material. We do not see the glory of God revealed in the ordinary. We don't even see God involved in the ordinary, earthly parts of our lives.

And that has two negative consequences, one social and one personal. The social one is that we receive the Bread of Life on Sunday but don't see the connection that has with hungry people on Monday. Personal faith is vitally important. But if it stays personal, if it doesn't expand out into the world but stays bottled up inside us, then it is no earthy good, and it ceases to grow because it has nowhere to go.

The second consequence of not believing God is involved in the ordinary is personal. It leads us to be afraid that God's love for us is no earthy good, does not extend to the material, real world, and therefore has nothing to do with our every day life.

That is not so. Yes, God is here on Sunday morning, and here is a special way. But God is also with us on Monday morning. And on Friday night, too, even at a party. God is involved in, revealed in our ordinary, earthly life. The story of Jesus turning water into wine for a wedding party might seem a little surprising. But it shouldn't be. We've just finished celebrating Christmas, when God's Son was born into our earth in the ordinary way. Jesus has identified with us. Not only spiritually but also physically. For God's glory was most clearly revealed when Jesus suffered on the cross so that we might be made right with God.

That means that it might not be a bad idea to start looking for signs of God's presence and God's glory in our every day, ordinary, earthly world. In our marriages, in our schools, in our work, in our homes. If we do not see God's presence it might be because we don't expect to see it and therefore have become blind to it.

And it means that we might want to start consciously inviting God into all the ordinary, every day, earthly places of our lives. Jesus' glory was revealed at Cana because someone had invited him to the party. Like Mary, we can expect God's presence and God's glory to be revealed in the real world in a real way.