

Who Knew?

John 2:1-11

The Second Sunday after the Epiphany, January 20, 2019

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

What is going on here? Who knows what is going on here?

Why is the wine so important? Why would the mother of our Lord consider it so important that she would persuade our Lord to do something about it? Why would the Lord rebuke His mother for asking about the wine? It certainly was not because He could not produce the wine. He produced the wine and in gallons. So why did He rebuke her? And when He rebuked her, why did the Lord point out to her that His hour had not yet come? What is His hour and why did He point out to His mother that it had not yet come?

Why does the chief steward call the groom and ask him about the wine? Didn't the groom hire the steward to administer wine to the guests? Shouldn't the chief steward have had enough wine on hand? If the chief steward is the one who is in the know who should be administering the feast, why does he ask the groom about the good wine? Does he believe that the groom is holding a stash of wine somewhere that the groom has not told the chief steward about?

The answers are both simple and complicated at the same time. Let us start with the complicated. Apparently it is considered in some Jewish circles especially ancient near eastern ones to be a curse on the couple if they run out of wine at their wedding feast.

This is backed by the fact that frequently in the psalms wine is put forward as the blessing of God. One psalm says, "They will rejoice more than when their grain and wine abound." This is an indication that wine and grain were standards of blessing by which other praises of God were measured. While God does warn against the overuse of wine and its deleterious effects, that does not mean that wine in and of itself is a bad thing. In a way wine is like sex, it is created by God and is therefore fundamentally good, but if it is used outside of the ordinance of God it becomes a great evil. Therefore wine is a good thing. It is of God. He created it. And it is the standard by which blessings are determined.

Therefore when the wine lacked at the wedding feast, the mother of our Lord was concerned that a curse was coming upon the couple. She knows that her Son is the source of all of God's blessings and can bless the couple with the necessary wine that will be a blessing of God upon the couple.

The Lord therefore rebukes His mother because His hour had not yet come. You have to read the rest of John's Gospel in order to understand what our Lord means by His hour. On the night before our Lord was betrayed, He said to His disciples that His hour had come. In subsequent instruction to His disciples He called it the hour of His glorification. Since our Lord was betrayed and crucified and raised immediately following these instructions, our Lord indicates that His hour is the hour of His crucifixion and resurrection.

The reason that the Lord brings up His hour when His mother asks Him to produce wine for the couple is because the Lord knows that wine will be a blessing on the couple. He also knows that His mother is right by going to Him as the source of all blessing. But He also knows that in order for Him to bestow all blessings on anyone even upon this couple, He will have to die and rise again and He knows that the time has not yet come for that to happen.

God bless mothers. Our Lord's mother ignores all of that and turns to the servers at the wedding and tells them, "Do whatever He tells you." His mother bypasses Him because ironically she has authority over the Lord because she is His mother. While I object to Roman Catholics praying to Mary, I can certainly understand why they try it. In the case of this wedding feast the mother of our Lord gets results. The Lord goes along with His mother and commands that the stone water jars in the home for ritual purposes be filled with water and some of the water be drawn and taken to the chief steward.

It becomes wine and the chief steward is amazed and has no idea where it came from. That means that the chief steward does not know where the blessings of God come from. The reason that he does not know where the blessings of God come from is because he has not done his duty.

The chief steward is responsible for administering the wedding feast. Wedding feasts in the ancient near east went on for several days. He has a lot of people to feed for a long period of time. Chief stewards must organize the food for everyone and the servers who will serve it. He must make sure that the food and wine are available and that the servers are trained to serve it at the right time. This chief steward should have had enough wine prepared for the guests to begin with. It was because of his negligence that the blessings of God beginning with the wine at their wedding feast were not bestowed upon this couple. In fact this chief steward is so inept that he actually asks the groom where the wine came from when it was the groom who hired the chief steward to make sure the wine came and was there to be served.

The chief steward has not performed his vocation. Since the groom hired the chief steward to oversee the wedding feast the chief steward's vocation was to administer the feast. Because the groom is the groom he has authority from God to hire a chief steward. The chief steward that he hires receives authority to administer the feast on the groom's behalf. Therefore the chief steward has the call of God to administer the feast and he does not do it. He does not do it because he does not know from whence blessings come.

But the Lord's mother knows from whence blessings come. She knows that is her Son. And the other people who know where the wine came from are the servers who filled the water jars with water and drew some out and took it to the chief steward. Because the servers know where the wine came from, like the mother of our Lord they also know where the blessing of God comes from. And how do they know where the blessing of God comes from, because they did what the Lord said to do. When the Lord tells you what to do, what else is there to do except what the Lord tells you to do? They do it and they know where the wine comes from and by knowing where the wine comes from they know where the blessing of God comes from.

So if you want to know where the blessings of God comes from, do what the Lord tells you to do.

Now, has Pastor just gone off the deep end? Did we hear him right? Did he just say that in order to know from where the blessings of God come we are to do what He says? Hasn't anybody told him that this is a Lutheran congregation and Lutheran congregations are saved by grace? If they are saved by grace then the knowledge of God's blessings is by grace also, is it not?

Ok. No, I have not gone off the deep end. I am aware that you and I are saved by grace. What I also know is that the commandments of God are themselves also an act of grace. Without them we would not know from where our blessings come.

I think it is a product of believing in evolution that we view the commandments of God as rules to be followed and not as instruction from God on how the creation works. In other words we confess with our lips that God made heaven and earth, but our hearts are far from that. If we truly believed that God actually made the heaven and the earth, then we would also believe that His commandments are in harmony with the creation. Thus by keeping His commandments we will be blessed and we will know the source of our blessings.

Or perhaps after 500 years of the Reformation we still have not gotten over our proclivity as human beings to use a commandment to earn our salvation instead of using commands for what God intended commands to be.

Do you seriously believe that the servers who drew the water and took it to the chief steward were earning their salvation by doing so? Do you seriously believe that by doing this they earned their right to know from where their blessings come? If they were going to earn anything from the one who makes water into wine, they were going to have to do a lot more than that. And yet, by doing what the Lord said (and what else are you going to do with what the Lord says other than what He said), when they did take the wine to the chief steward they knew where it came from, but the chief steward who had not done what the Lord told him to do did not know where it came from. Therefore the servers know from whence God's blessings flow. They flow from Jesus. And all who do the instructions of the Lord will also know that blessings flow from Jesus.

If you do what Jesus instructs you do in all things, you will find that all things were indeed made through Him and because all things were made through Him, He knows how all things should operate. Therefore by doing things the way that He instructs is like following the manual that came with the device you just bought. You will find that He is the source of blessing as you find that blessing will roll over you when you do what He instructs.

This is true not only of His commandments regarding life, but also of His instructions regarding strange things that make about as much sense as Him telling the servers to fill water jars with water in order to solve a wine problem.

For example, later in the Divine Service the Lord will bid you come forward and eat some bread. He commands you to do so and when He commands you to do so He says the bread is His body. He does the same thing with the wine. The Lord is always messing with wine. He summons you to drink the wine and He tells you the wine is His blood. Then He tells you that this is for your forgiveness which is another way of saying that this is for your salvation.

Do you earn your salvation by eating bread and drinking wine? If you think that you earn your salvation by eating bread and drinking wine, you need to reexamine your own life and the holiness of God. If you are going to earn your salvation, you had better be doing more magnificent works than eating and drinking.

No! The reason the Lord issues these commands and instructions is so that you may know where your blessings come from. If you do not keep the command, you will be like the chief steward unaware of where blessings come. But if you are like the servers and you keep the command of the Lord, you will know from where blessings come and you will know from whom to seek blessings when you need them.

For us the hour of the Lord has come and gone. He has been crucified and He has been raised from the dead. We know what His hour is and what His hour does to save

us from sin and death. The other instructions of the Lord simply tell us where that death and resurrection may be found so that we may know from whom and from when His blessings flow.

Who knew? You knew. You knew because you did what He told you to do.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.