

January 17, 2010

SOLI DEO GLORIA
2nd Sunday after Epiphany

Good Shepherd, Novi

JOHN 2:1-11
HE THUS REVEALED HIS GLORY.

In the name + of Jesus.

Alleluia. He said to me, "You are my servant, in whom I will display my splendor."
Alleluia. The verse of the day sums up the entire Epiphany season. Jesus is the one who has come to display the splendor of the Lord. He reveals himself as the Christ, the Lord's anointed. He reveals that he is the Lord himself!

This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed in Cana of Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him. (John 2:11) There is no doubt that a miracle will turn heads. Vintners from Bordeaux to the Napa Valley to Traverse Bay would love to produce vintage wines out of water. Doctors would love to heal the sick with the touch of a hand or with a firm word. Citizens of Haiti would have loved to have been able to calm the rocking of the earth with a simple command. Only Jesus has displayed such power. He thus revealed his glory – the glory and might of God who overrules nature by his divine power.

But the glory of God is not really found in displays of miraculous power. As I had mentioned, miracles will certainly turn heads; but displays of power do not produce comfort. God's displays of power have often left people cowering in fear. After all, if the one who judges the living and the dead is all-powerful, that means his judgment will come with punishment that is relentless and ruthless. It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. The fact that God is awesome and almighty only makes it that much more dreadful. And knowing that we have sins to answer for makes it absolutely terrifying!

But Jesus did not become flesh just to flex his divine muscles or impress us with his miraculous power. Jesus came to show us the Father. He came to reveal God to us. The glory of God is seen not in acts of power, but in acts of compassion. All of Jesus' miracles reveal that he is God; but also notice that all of Jesus' miracles were done out of compassion for others. He thus revealed his glory in every miracle he did.

For his first miracle, Jesus and his disciples had been invited to a wedding at Cana in Galilee. The bride and groom were responsible for providing food for all of their guests at their wedding feast. Such a feast could last for days, so the food and the wine would need to be abundant. But the bride and groom in Cana had run out of wine. Jesus' mother, Mary, was aware of the problem. She alerted Jesus. She did not tell Jesus what to do. She merely informed Jesus of the problem. He would know what to do. He would be compassionate. He would act. Jesus informed her that he would act when his time was right.

Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water," so they filled them to the brim. Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." (John 2:6-8) When the time was right, Jesus acted. The water which had filled the jars was changed into wine. Jesus provided so that the young married couple might be spared great shame. Where they had come up empty, Jesus supplied all their need. He thus revealed his glory.

Jesus revealed the glory of God by demonstrating his compassion. And when God has compassion, he does not dispense it in teaspoons, but in gallons. **Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons. (John 2:6)** If you do the math, that is 120-180 gallons of wine! Some might argue, *“Jesus, that is too much! These guests have already had too much. They have abused your gifts. Why give them anything at all?”* Yes, it is true. People do abuse God’s gifts. And yet, God never stops giving. God never stops loving. God never stops having compassion. He forgives, even when his love and mercy are abused. He thus revealed his glory – that he is the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, forgiving wickedness, rebellion, and sin.

You and I also have abused God’s gifts. But that is not God’s fault. The fact that man abuses God’s gifts does not mean that God sponsors sin, anymore than Jesus’ miracle encouraged the wedding guests to get drunk. God’s benevolence and forgiveness are not a license to go out and sin all the more. If we think, “Well, it doesn’t matter what I do, God will forgive me anyway,” that makes a mockery of God’s mercy. St. Paul describes true repentance: **Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. (Romans 12:9)** The Lord does not tell you to run to what is evil, certain that God will forgive you for it. Again, that makes a mockery of God’s mercy. St. Paul warned: **“Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction...” (Galatians 6:7,8)** If you abuse God’s mercy, using it as an excuse to make light of the evil that you do, repent lest you reap destruction and perish.

A bride and groom were in Cana, fretting at the predicament they were in. They had no more wine. The feast was as good as over. There was no hope for things to get better. There was no way to hide their short-coming. There was no escape from shame. Jesus knew that they were out of wine, but his time to help had not yet come. He wanted the bride and groom to know that they had come up empty. They were lacking. They were hopeless. It was then that Jesus acted. For, he wants us to know that he alone is our only hope. He alone provides all that we need. When we recognize that we have run dry, he fills to the brim.

He thus reveals his glory to you. For you and I, like all men, have fallen short of the glory of God. We want to hear how good we have been, but we have come up empty. We have no way of undoing our sins. We have no hope of filling up the measure of righteousness that we need. That is where Jesus comes to save us; and thus he reveals his glory. His glory is not found in mighty acts of power. His glory is seen in weakness and humility. His compassion is on display at a cross where he bleeds and dies for the sins of the world – for your sins. Jesus drinks the cup of God’s wrath to its last bitter drop. God’s wrath has been consumed. Jesus’ holy life is the full measure of righteousness. God’s commands have been fulfilled. The glory of God is not that he scares you; the glory of God is that he saves you.

Thus he has revealed his glory to you too. Jesus pours out his mercy abundantly. In fact, there is no limit to Jesus’ mercy. When you come to Jesus, confessing your sins, even if you confess the same sin again and again – for which of us has mastered our flesh? – Jesus will not cast you aside because you have had too much forgiveness. Instead, you will still find the full measure of forgiveness, up to the brim. He thus reveals his glory to you.

What Jesus gives is far better than anything you could produce. When Jesus provided wine for the bride and groom at Cana, he did not simply give something so that they could get by. **The master of the banquet called the bridegroom aside and said, “Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; by you have saved the best till now.” (John 2:9,10)** Jesus’ gift was not only abundant, but it was superior in every way.

And his mercy is superior to all other gifts he gives; for his mercy endures forever. He does not merely tolerate you. He loves you. He does not just give you a non-committal shrug of his shoulders toward you. He welcomes you with a warm embrace. He does not merely put a band aid on you. He promises you a glorious, incorruptible body at the resurrection of the dead. He does not merely promise you that life will be better by Friday. He promises you eternal joy and uninterrupted peace in heaven, at the eternal wedding banquet.

He thus reveals his glory to you, so that you will put your faith – your whole faith – in him. Jesus is the only hope you have; but he supplies all the blessing you need.

In the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.