

THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY, JAN. 25, 2026
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John 2:1-11 | The Wedding at Cana

† I preach in God's name for God's people. Let my words be from God and for God's people. **Amen**

Good morning.

In the welcome message in the bulletin, I mentioned that the *constant ability to feast* in our culture makes the *Wedding at Cana* more difficult to grasp. We do not have to wait for grapes to ferment, for oranges to be in season, or for livestock to be ready for slaughter. We can have nearly any food—nearly anything—at any time.

It seems to me that the main guard and salve against this culture of excess, of being able to have *anything-we-want-right-now*, is *fasting*. A spiritual help to being presented with having *anything* is to willingly go without *some things* for the good of our bodies and souls.

Notice that's the situation we have found ourselves in two weeks-in-a-row. Last week, we fasted from *the eucharist*, and this week, for the good of the whole congregation, we are fasting from it again — until we can again be united together, and partake of the heavenly food together — as the body of Christ.

It would be *better*, of course, to eat and drink the heavenly food of the *eucharist* after this water-made-wine passage which so strongly and clearly anticipates the body and blood of our Lord Jesus poured out for you and for me in the bread and wine of the eucharist. But we will have to *wait* to enjoy that *next week*, together.

A reminder: **THE EPIPHANY SEASON** is about the revelation of God's radiant glory through Jesus his Son.

We have heard, therefore, of the Star's brightness — pointing out, revealing, and leading — the Magi to the baby Jesus. We have heard about the Baptism of Jesus, about the magnificence of the revelation that this

man Jesus, being baptized by John in the River Jordan, is the Son of God with God's Spirit. And finally, we heard about Peter's Confession — that Jesus is *the Christ*, the long-expected man who has come to fulfill God's promise of king and kingdom.

THIS MORNING we heard that Jesus turned water into wine. We must take this for exactly what it is — water was drawn; jars were filled; servants took that to the master of the feast; and the water had become *good wine*. John gave us more — many details that are worthy of our time and attention. For example, John begins this story by noting *when* this occurred. He tells us also *where* this occurred. In fact, we find that he gives us answers to *all* the question words. And so, let's use these questions — **What?** **When?** **Where?** **How?** **Why?** — to reflect through this passage.

What? A sign. *When?* The third day. *Where?* A wedding in Cana. *How?* Jars of Water. *Why?* That his disciples may believe in him.

I. What? A sign.

John tells us that the water-made-wine was a sign — in fact, this was the *first sign*.

We had better know what a sign is. And as it turns out, we do. We should think of this sign in the same way we as street signs or a big poster that is telling us something. A stop sign means *to stop*. A protestor's sign *communicates* what is being protested. The word "grocery" on a sign tells us that this is a place we can buy groceries. And so on.

We should think, therefore, that this *first sign* is a giant poster board, a big billboard, that is telling us *something*. So what is this story telling us? What does this *first sign* mean? To understand the sign, we have to know what it says, what it looks like, and so forth.

In other words, we had better get to the rest of the question words to understand what *happened*. And so, let's ask **When?**

II. When? On the third day.

The very *first sign* that Jesus did begins on *the third day*.

It's a bit unclear to me *exactly* from which day this *third day* is— His baptism? The calling of his disciples? Leaving the Jordan? Even so, because of how John tells us this story, it is clear what John wants us to know.

The thing to get here is that this *third day* is not a random detail, but a very important one. We know the rest of the story of Jesus, and so we already have a pretty good idea what *the third day* means. We know that the third day is *when* Jesus rose from the dead. He died, and three days later, he rose from the dead. So already, this *first sign* — the very first sign that Jesus did — has to do with Jesus' death and resurrection.

Jesus' death and resurrection is what John is clueing us into. The big sign that John is pointing out to us is that the water-made-wine is *about* Jesus' death and resurrection.

III. Where? At a wedding.

Where does this sign take place? At a Wedding in Cana.

It's unclear exactly which Cana this story references — there are a few candidates. Even so, it is clear what John wants us to know — that this takes place *at a wedding*.

You'll have to stretch your biblical memory for just a bit to really get how significant this is. A wedding is, really, how everything began — the marriage of Adam to Eve. We can color in quite a bit, reflecting on *Song of Songs* or the story of *Ruth*. But a wedding is also how everything *ends* — the marriage feast of Christ and his Bride.

This *first sign* is pointing us forward to *that* wedding feast — that heavenly, eternal feast of Christ with his People, of which *the eucharist (holy communion)* is truly a foretaste.

IV. How? Jars of water.

There is more here than we can get to this morning. For example, the dialogue between Jesus and his mother. For now, just notice her faith: “Do whatever he tells you.”

The jars were for the Jewish rite of purification. Jesus has the servants — literally, *deacons* — draw water in these purification jars. The deacons do so, and couldn't be more obedient — the jars are filled to the brim. Then the *deacons* drew some and took it to the master of the feast.

Note what the steward of the feast says about the wine: usually the best wine is drunk first. He doesn't complain about the wine that has already been served — he does not say, "Finally the good stuff!" He simply remarks that in comparison, and stunningly, this wine is "the good wine." There are a few lessons here.

(1) What was pronounced over Creation as each day continued? God declared that what he had done was *good*. And on the sixth day, upon making man, he declared what he had made was *very good*.

This same thing has happened here. The wine before was good — but this new wine is better. This wine that Jesus has made is *very good*.

(2) The jars meant for purification are all full of wine. They could *no longer* be used for purification. The only thing they would be good for is keeping this wine.

The Old Covenant was not bad. The Old Covenant was good — but in comparison, the New Covenant is superior — it is *very good*.

(3) Finally, what Jesus has done is truly a sign that reveals his glory. And what John has done in how he tells this story is really quite remarkable — it has to do with Creation.

John is subtly but clearly telling us that just as *in the beginning*, here the *one through whom the world was made* is making something *new* and *good*.

V. Why? For belief.

Just a few days before, Jesus had promised Nathanael that, "You will see greater things than these." And now, Nathanael is seeing a very great sign. John tells us that this *first sign* was revealed his glory and brought about belief:

“This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.”
(John 2:11, ESV)

This *first sign* — the one that makes us expect something to take place *on the third day*, the one that points forward to the heavenly *wedding* feast, the one that begins to reveal that Jesus is the one through whom the world was made and that he makes *very good* things — is so that we believe in Jesus.

This first sign is so that we believe Jesus, and in believing, we have life in him. We give thanks for his death and resurrection; we give thanks for the eucharist and look forward to the full heavenly feast; and we look forward to Christ’s return in glory when he truly makes all things new and good.

Everything about this *first sign* is about what Jesus has come to accomplish — give up his own body and blood on the cross, so that we may partake of his own body and blood and live forevermore.

So, then, let us be strengthened in faith by what our Lord has done at the Wedding in Cana, knowing that we can trust in every promise he has given us. And let us look forward to next week when we can again partake of the heavenly body and blood of our Lord Jesus *together*.

Christ the Lord is worthy of all worship and praise and glory and honor and majesty, now and forever. **Amen and amen.**