

Sermon for January 18th, 2026
SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

READINGS

Exodus 7:14-24

14 Then the LORD said to Moses, “Pharaoh's heart is hardened; he refuses to let the people go. **15** Go to Pharaoh in the morning, as he is going out to the water, and stand on the bank of the Nile to meet him. Take in your hand the staff that turned into a serpent. **16** And you shall say to him, ‘The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, sent me to you, saying, “Let my people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness.” But so far, you have not obeyed. **17** Thus says the LORD, “By this you shall know that I am the LORD: behold, with the staff that is in my hand I will strike the water that is in the Nile, and it shall turn into blood. **18** The fish in the Nile shall die, and the Nile will stink, and the Egyptians will grow weary of drinking water from the Nile.”’” **19** And the LORD said to Moses, “Say to Aaron, ‘Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt, over their rivers, their canals, and their ponds, and all their pools of water, so that they may become blood, and there shall be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, even in vessels of wood and in vessels of stone.’”

20 Moses and Aaron did as the LORD commanded. In the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants he lifted up the staff and struck the water in the Nile, and all the water in the Nile turned into blood. **21** And the fish in the Nile died, and the Nile stank, so that the Egyptians could not drink water from the Nile. There was blood throughout all the land of Egypt. **22** But the magicians of Egypt did the same by their secret arts. So Pharaoh's heart remained hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said. **23** Pharaoh turned and went into his house, and he did not take even this to heart. **24** And all the Egyptians dug along the Nile for water to drink, for they could not drink the water of the Nile.

Psalm 111

1 Praise the LORD!

I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart,
in the company of the upright, in the congregation.

2 Great are the works of the LORD,
studied by all who delight in them.

3 Full of splendor and majesty is his work,
and his righteousness endures forever.

4 He has caused his wondrous works to be remembered;
the LORD is gracious and merciful.

5 He provides food for those who fear him;
he remembers his covenant forever.

6 He has shown his people the power of his works,
in giving them the inheritance of the nations.

7 The works of his hands are faithful and just;
all his precepts are trustworthy;

8 they are established forever and ever,
to be performed with faithfulness and uprightness.

9 He sent redemption to his people;
he has commanded his covenant forever.
Holy and awesome is his name!
10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom;
all those who practice it have a good understanding.
His praise endures forever!

Ephesians 5:22-33

22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.
25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. 28 In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, 30 because we are members of his body. 31 “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” 32 This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. 33 However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

John 2:1-11

1 On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. 2 Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples. 3 When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.” 4 And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come.” 5 His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.”
6 Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. 7 Jesus said to the servants, “Fill the jars with water.” And they filled them up to the brim. 8 And he said to them, “Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast.” So they took it. 9 When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom 10 and said to him, “Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now.” 11 This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.

Our text for meditation this Second Sunday after Epiphany is on our Gospel reading.

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Introduction

Here we come across the first of the seven signs in St. John's Gospel.¹ Of all the miracles Christ performed, when writing his Gospel, St. John chose these seven as the ones which most clearly demonstrated Jesus's identity as the Messiah, His role in delivering us from sin and death, and His Divinity. The Apostle does not exclude the other miracles Jesus did because he disregards their *importance*; in fact, later in the book he mentions them.² But for St. John, these seven signs help the reader meditate on who Jesus is, and deepens their faith in Him on account of that. Knowing that

1 The others are: healing the official's son (John 4:46-54), healing the paralyzed man (5:1-15), feeding the five thousand (6:5-13), walking on water (6:16-21), healing the man born blind (9:1-7), and raising Lazarus from the dead (11:1-44).

2 John 20:30-31

salvation is brought about by faith in Christ, this remains the author's only goal, to help us believe. Let us then, as good Christians, do so with the account of the wedding at Cana and deepen our faith.

Searching Out the Meaning

In the other three Gospels, the miracles of Jesus are typically accompanied by *teaching*. Sts. Matthew, Mark and Luke were concerned with how we live for Jesus, and that means that their priority with miracles is showing us what Jesus told us to believe and do. But St. John conspicuously leaves out any teaching for the wedding at Cana, only mentioning that Jesus “manifested His glory” by turning the water into wine. He *assumes* that you have read the other three Gospels, that you *know* what it is Christians are supposed to believe and do; now it is time to ruminate on *why* you should believe in Him. Again, in the twentieth chapter he tells us “These things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His Name.”

If we are to find greater faith in this sign, we must search out more in the event than just the action itself. Yes, Jesus manifested His Glory by turning the water into wine, but we would be silly if we thought it was nothing more than our Savior *showing off*. Any black magician could turn one liquid into another, as we saw in Exodus when Pharaoh's magicians opposed Moses by turning water into blood like Moses did.³ But Jesus is not some performer or sorcerer: He has a *point* that He wants to make when He shows His Divine power, and we must meditate on it. But speaking of Moses...

Christ and Moses

Moses was charged by God to change the waters of the Nile into blood. With this first plague upon the Egyptians, the prophet condemned their sins of idolatry, oppression, and murder. But that was a matter of *Law*, and the blood bore witness to it. By changing the waters of the Nile, God showed Pharaoh a representation of the blood he and his dynasty had shed. He was to understand that the blood was required of him by Divine Judgment on account of his sins.

Jesus turns the water not into *blood*, but into wine. Not just any wine, but *good* wine, the best that was served at that wedding, increasing their enjoyment. His arrival means that it is not time for the Law, but for the Gospel. His Atonement worked for us meant that our sins are forgiven; unlike Pharaoh blood is no longer required on our part, and thus it is time for us to celebrate just as the wedding guests were doing when Jesus provided them with more to drink. St. John remembered this miracle, and put it here in the text because it shows us the *Good News* of Christ's ministry and arrival as being superior to anything Moses ever did.

Communion and Sacrifice

But speaking of water and blood, we cannot forget that blood itself is a theme in the Gospel of John. Jesus says “My Blood is true drink” in the sixth chapter,⁴ and in the words of Institution we recite at the Sacrament of the Altar, we recall that Jesus told us the wine in Communion is His Blood.⁵ Water, wine, and blood are ever present in John's Gospel, the same way that they are present throughout all of Scripture. And what does Christ say when He institutes Communion? That the wine is His Blood *poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins*.

By this we know that condemnation is not absent in the Gospel, as it is rather *redirected*. By turning the water into wine, Jesus shows Himself to be greater than Moses, instituting joy whereas Moses had proclaimed condemnation when he turned water into blood. But the water and blood are present in the Crucifixion, for when Christ was on the Cross these both poured out from His side when

³ Exodus 7:20-23

⁴ John 6:55

⁵ Matthew 26:28

He was stabbed with a Roman spear.⁶ You see my friends, Christ took the water and blood unto Himself, leaving us with the wine to drink. He took condemnation that belonged to us, and in exchange He gave us cause to celebrate something *new*.

Conclusion: Purification

This is why it is no coincidence that Jesus used jars for purification to turn the water into wine. The Man who would soon take their condemnation by shedding His Blood and water gave them the wine of celebration. The Man who would one day take a cup of wine and tell everyone that His Blood was in it for their purification, gave them wine to drink from vessels of purification. Do you see, my friends? The Wedding at Cana was a presentation of the Gospel and a foreshadowing of the Communion service, wherein all who partook of Christ's purifying wine were made to have greater joy than before. And when we partake of the Sacrament, we too are purified and brought to great joy as we drink something only Jesus Christ can bring us.

A wedding, may I remind you, is a *covenant* ceremony. Christ turns water into wine to help people celebrate a new covenant occurring, just as He tells us when He takes the cup in His hands that it is the *New Covenant* in His Blood. This event brings us to greater joy in Him, knowing that we are brought to participate in the celebration of a new Kingdom being inaugurated by the Atonement He enacts to save us. By recording this sign for posterity in his Gospel, St. John advises us to do as the disciples did and believe in Christ, for He promises us far greater joy in His New Covenant, and far greater celebration in His New Kingdom, than the guests at Cana ever experienced.

Now the Peace of our Lord, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.