

Do Whatever He Tells You

John 2:1 – 11

January 17, 2010

Our scripture reading today comes from the 2nd chapter of John verses 1 through 11. Please listen now for the reading of God's Word for the people of God.

¹On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, ²and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. ³When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine."

⁴"Dear woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied, "My time has not yet come."

⁵His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

⁶Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.

⁷Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim.

⁸Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet."

They did so, ⁹and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside ¹⁰and said, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now."

¹¹This, 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.

This is the Word of God and It can be trusted. Thanks be to God.

Let us pray:

God of Heaven, you are faithful to hear our prayers and to respond to our every need; for this we give you thanks and praise today. As we continue through our service, we ask that you soften our hearts and focus our minds on the word you bring us today. Like the vessels of water before the transformation, we find ourselves today without sparkle and void of life. Create within each of us a transformation that will bring life to our being, zeal for your presence and inexplicable joy; help us to be the best we can for You and Your work. In the meditations of hearts and in the words of my lips, speak to us today, Oh Lord. In Christ wonderful and Holy name we pray. Amen!

Today we find ourselves in the second Sunday of Epiphany, and as we discussed last week, we find ourselves this morning in a continued season of revelation and awareness; an awareness not only of our own shortcomings but an awareness of the power of God in our lives and in the world today. Last Sunday's lectionary offered us a first glimpse of the divine nature of Christ; a glimpse that marked the beginning of the ministry of Jesus Christ, affirmed his relationship to God and offered clarity to what we have come to know as the Doctrine of the Trinity. During our Tuesday night study this past week, we discussed in detail a theme of Jesus' Baptism that we failed to point out last Sunday, that is, the affirmation of the triune Godhead as seen in Matthew's account of Jesus' baptism.

¹⁶As soon as Jesus was baptized; he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. ¹⁷And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:16 - 17, NIV)

Here, in a single moment in time, God the Creator, Christ our Redeemer and the Holy Spirit our sustainer are seen interacting – giving us a glimpse at the functionality of Tertullian's "One God in three persons" explanation of the Godhead. Though the word *trinity* is not used in the bible, the doctrine is formally defined in the Nicene Creed, which declares Jesus to be: "God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father."

This morning's reading, in keeping with the themes of *Epiphany* again offers us insight into the very power and nature of Christ. Know that as with most readings we encounter during the year, there are many varying lessons we can take from our lectionary reading today. First note that the setting of our reading today takes place during a wedding celebration. Though we do not know whose wedding this is, the very fact that it is a wedding celebration speaks to the very nature of the account given. Our reading today gives an account of Jesus' first miracle and so the setting of this first sign is significant. In ancient times a wedding was very a big social occasion brimming with celebration. It was not uncommon, then, for Jewish writers to use wedding imagery to speak about God's ultimate purpose (Matthew 22:2 – 14, 25:1 – 13; Luke 14:16 – 24). In

discovering that the account given today takes place during a wedding gives us an expectation that something wonderful will take place; that some sort of revelation will take place . . . and so it will.

Equally important is the imagery of wine – often overused I think to justify the drinking of alcohol and why not? Jesus did however, turn water into wine. But the reading is much more than that. If you will recall that the Old Testament authors (and later echoed in the teachings of Jesus) the symbolism of vineyards for Israel and wine for God’s abundant provisions were used to convey blessing from God to the people of God. (Isaiah 5:1 – 7, 25:6, 27:2 – 6; Jeremiah 31:12; Amos 9:13; Hosea 2:22; Joel 2:24; John 15:5) The fact that the wine ran out, then, speaks to the emptiness of the Jewish leaders at the time of John’s writing of his gospel and speaks equally to the emptiness that we ourselves experience in our lives apart from relationship with God. Wine, in and of itself is unremarkable, but touched by the hand of Christ wine can be something remarkable; a choice wine we are told in today’s reading. And so our lives, as unremarkable as they may seem to us can be transformed into something wonderful – better than anticipated or expected – as we find new life in relationship with Christ Jesus.

I say all this not to create distraction but rather to segue into what I read this morning to be an important word for our lives and for the life of this growing community of faith. Mary came to Jesus when she discovered that the wine was gone. She had a problem and she knew who could help. Notice she doesn’t ask him to do anything for her, she simply tells him that they are out of wine. She doesn’t suggest how Jesus should solve her problem and she doesn’t ask him to do anything about it, she simply knows that *he is capable to take care of the need and trust that he will take care of that need*. I am here to testify to you this morning that Jesus is able to take care of our needs and we do not need to instruct him on how to take care of those needs; we need only to acknowledge and trust.

Like Mary, we don’t even really have to ask him to take care of those needs; we simply need to acknowledge to Jesus that we have a need. Don’t you know that Jesus knew they were out of wine before Mary came to him? Don’t you know that Jesus knows our every need before we come to him? Jesus is faithful and just to take care of our every need, but we must first acknowledge that need to him. It isn’t that we need to

make Jesus aware that we can't do it without his help, he is already aware of our own inadequacies. We need to acknowledge to ourselves that we cannot do it without his help. This is why he asks Mary, "Dear woman, why do you involve me?" Before Jesus can fully take care of our every need, we must fully acknowledge that we cannot do it alone. Mary affirms her belief in Jesus' ability to help in the way that she responds to Jesus inquiry. Without any discussion and without any further dialogue she turned to the servants and said, "Do whatever he tells you." Had Mary continued to give her input into the solution, she would have only gotten in the way. She had to put herself aside and place her entire faith and trust in Jesus.

I may have told the following story on a previous occasion, but I want to tell it again. I think it speaks clearly to the type of interference that we ourselves can create when we ourselves intercede in accomplishing the Will of God. There is no doubt in my mind that when God called a few of us to bring New Day Worship Center to Toccoa, that it was indeed a call from God. We each, however, had our own idea of how we were to bring God's word into this community, especially those who had been shut out and forgotten by those closest to them; that is those you have heard me refer to as being marginalized and disenfranchised by the world. Having experienced our own heartache and pain of being rejected, we knew that we wanted a place for all of God's children to feel welcome, accepted and most importantly valued. Many have referred to us as a *gay* church, but I want you to know that even though we are deeply rooted the LGBTQ Community, New Day Worship Center has been planted to extend beyond that community and to reach all who are seeking reconciliation and renewed relationship with God through the message of Jesus Christ. So we set out together to fulfill that call and inevitably we allowed ourselves to get in the way.

We looked at building after building, bylaws, mission statements, doctrinal beliefs and various styles of worship. Pretty soon, we forgot about God's call and were worried more about how it was all going to happen rather than who it was happening for. One evening I called Chris while I was on break from my evening job, and I told him that I just couldn't do it anymore. I was tired, discouraged, broken and I had even begun to believe that if I just didn't wake up the next day then that would be ok. I couldn't do it anymore. Chris and I decided that it was ok for me to quit Emmaus, to cancel all plans for starting a church and to just start looking

elsewhere for a place to worship. Rather than reveal our decision right away, we agreed to wait until the next day to tell our friends and family what we had decided. That night, Bud's father Clarence passed away. His death marked the real start of making New Day Worship Center a reality.

I am not suggesting that Clarence's death unfolded for the sole purpose of setting us on the right track. I am suggesting however, that once I made a public confession that I had a need and could no longer do it on my own; God stepped up to the plate and said, "Finally, now I can take charge." When we try to put God in a box and try to instruct God in how we think God should take care of our needs, we only hinder the process. Likewise, when we simply make our need known and accept our own inabilities; God is faithful and just to take care of our needs and equally so our call. When Clarence passed away and we began to make plans for his funeral, God sent people into our lives and used the experience to speak to us the same words that Mary spoke to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." Here we see the revelation of our reading, the *epiphany* if you will. In order to do what he tells us, we must be willing to listen to what he has to say.

So I encourage you today, if you are worrying about how you are to carry out God's call on your life or if you are experiencing a need in your life and am unsure what to do about, then listen to Mary's words, "Do whatever he tells you." Her statement doesn't instruct us to sit back and trust in God and that all will be o.k. regardless. Her statement is about awareness and a call to action. You must not only confess your need and trust that a solution will be delivered, but you must be willing to move on it when you are told to do so. We have expanded our seating twice since we have been in this space and we have already begun the process of expanding again; not because of anything we have done, but because God has told us to do so. Some of you here this morning are hearing God's voice telling you to help those around you, to begin your own ministries either in this church or in your own communities, and some of you are hearing that soft sweet voice of God telling you that it is ok to be who you are and God is inviting you into relationship with him today. Won't you step up and do what he says? If he is calling you to minister to those around you, then do so. If he is calling you to help educate those around you about all inclusive the love of God and the value of all people in the Kingdom of God, then do so. If God is calling you into relationship today, then do as he tells you. Maybe you

have never known Christ as your personal savior and are seeking a new relationship or maybe you are seeking reconciliation this morning, whatever the case may be, do as he tells you today.

As you stand as you are comfortable this morning and we sing our sermon hymn, *Word of God Speak*, won't you listen for God's instruction in your life and do as you are instructed today. Amen!