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**In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.**

Things have changed in the church haven't they. A week ago last Friday the Church celebrated the Epiphany of our Lord - the light of Christ has come! And here at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church we celebrated this festival on the Eve of the Epiphany of our Lord by receiving the body and blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in the Divine Service, and afterward by removing the Christmas decorations from the church. Yet, even so, there were still some leftovers of the Christmas celebration last week as we remembered and celebrated the Feast of the Baptism of our Lord. The paraments were white and there remained a few beautiful poinsettias in the chancel.

Today is different. Today, even the remnants of the 12 day celebration of Christmas have been removed from the church proper and the altar is decked in green, the color of common time, the time of the church, ordinary time. Yet, I am excited today. I am excited because the last of the Gospel writers has given us the history of Jesus' attendance at a wedding feast, and whenever there is a wedding feast, especially in Scripture, this reminds us, those in church, those in the the body of Christ, those who are members of the bride of Christ, ...it reminds us of a wedding feast that is soon coming, when our Lord comes to judge the living and the dead.

Now weddings are always exciting, some more than others, your own certainly more than anyone else. But that final one will be something to celebrate for an eternity, ...really, an eternity. Wedding feasts have always been great celebrations. The engaged couple are excited about the day. Many guests are invited and come to the special celebration where God unites a man and a woman and makes them one flesh. Some who

come to the celebration watch the festivities hoping for the future and their own wedding day, others look back remembering their own wedding.

Here in the West, the service usually takes less than an hour and the reception can last for perhaps half a day. In Jesus' day (and even still today in many cultures) the wedding feast could take days, perhaps even an entire week. Today, in our culture, the invitations are sent out and the time and place are mentioned with precision. Then and there, the feast began whenever it began, when the bridegroom arrived; timing and clocks were not a factor. Here in our culture, the groom and his party wait for the bride's arrival and the gathered crowd becomes a little anxious if she is even a little bit delayed, as she almost always is. Then and there it is the groom who is to come to the feast so that it may begin, and those who gather can wait for quite a long time for his arrival.

Here in the West it is generally the family of the bride who pays for the wedding. Then and there in the Hebrew culture it was the groom who provided for the festivities, and as a shame based culture it would be a great affront if the feast was not adequately provisioned.

This is the type of celebration to which Jesus is invited along with His first five disciples. And so Jesus is there.

Mother Mary says, "*Do whatever He tells you to do.*" Good advice. Mary has involved Jesus with a problem at the wedding feast. Do whatever Jesus tells you to do. And what has He told you to do? The ten commandments tell us plainly enough, and our epistle lesson does a good job too. <sup>(Romans 12:6-16)</sup> When Jesus was a 12 year old boy, His gentle rebuke of His mother was not sin, but was a pronouncement of His eternal origin. Jesus is the eternally begotten son of God the Father. The twelve year-old

Jesus gently rebukes his Mother Mary and says to her "I must be about my Father's business." What is this business? It is His father's business to save sinners from their sin. This is God's desire.

Jesus' answer to Mother Mary this week has much the same tone today but now Jesus seems to be turning a corner. He has been baptized and anointed to be about His mission and His ministry and He is focusing His attention there. When the mother of our Lord says to Him, "*They have no more wine,*" Jesus replies, quite literally, "*What to me and to you woman?*" Said like that it sounds quite rude and our English Standard Version translation with its "*Woman, What does this have to do with Me*" isn't much better, but to one raised here in South Carolina it might sound more like "*What is that to me and to you, Ma'am.*" This does not sound, to our ears, quite as harsh as "*Woman, What does this have to do with Me*". Children, especially you who know the fourth commandment,<sup>(See Luther's explanation to the 4th Commandment)</sup> Jesus is not despising or angering His mother, but He is distancing himself from her. He is showing Mary the respect that she is due as His mother, but, in effect, He is saying to her again, "I must be about my Father's business and this business will take me away from you." (in heartbreaking and painful ways). But Jesus continues, "*My time has not yet come.*"

His time has not yet come, but His time will come and that is the destination of the path He is walking here as He attends the wedding feast with His first five disciples. This path that Jesus walks is a path which only He can walk and it is the path that His Father sent Him to walk. It will ultimately end in

His betrayal by one of His chosen disciples, desertion by the other eleven, and His torture and death by crucifixion. This is what Jesus came to do so that He might pay the price for your sins, so that He might pay the price for His disciple's sins, so that He might pay the price for His mother's sins, so that He might pay the price for the wedding couple's sins. But here, His time has not yet come so His mother tells the servants to do whatever He says.

Jesus' time has not yet come; He has other things He to do before His time comes. He will gather many disciples around Himself. He will call twelve of them to serve as trusted Apostles. He will teach them who He is and why He came and He teaches the multitudes as He makes His way on this path to the cross. He will preach the Gospel of repentance to them all and will breathe faith and life into their hearts and finally after He has walked the path that was given to Him (God the Son) by God the Father He will pay for the sins of the world, be raised from the dead and will ascend to the right hand of the Father and send God the Holy Spirit to reach you by the power of His Word and sacraments, filling you with faith.

But here at the wedding feast in Cana, Jesus' time is not yet come. The wine has run out and the bridegroom is about to be shamed. This can make him an outcast from his community, "*Can this man provide for His wife?!*" Perhaps the groom is one of Jesus' brothers. Or, more likely, the bride is one of His sisters. Perhaps this is why Mary inserts herself into these circumstances. Perhaps this is why she brings Jesus into this problem. Jesus says, "*My time has not yet come.*" ... "*Do whatever He tells you to do.*" Mary tells the servants. Jesus has the servants fill the six large stone jars with water. Jesus takes the water filled jars used for the Old Testament purification rites and changes that water into wine and not just

adequate wine but the best wine, even so much so that the chief steward remarks to the bridegroom that this is better wine than before. *"You have kept the best wine till now."* And lots of it too. Jesus has produced an overabundance of fine wine for this wedding feast so that His disciples might see that the Lord they follow is the Word made flesh through whom the world was made. Creation obeys her Creator. As the Author of creation, Jesus has the power to speak wine into existence. He has the power to turn death into life. He has the power to give His blood for you for the forgiveness of your sins and this He does by the power of His Word. Here at the wedding feast he changes water into wine.

At the wedding feast of Cana, Jesus saved the bridegroom from a terrible embarrassment and shame. He did this by turning water into wine and providing an overabundance of the finest wine the world will ever know.

Here at the altar Jesus speaks wine into His blood so that your faith in Him might grow, so that true faith might be yours, so that salvation and forgiveness might be yours. This He does by His Holy Word, which in His speaking, makes things what they are.

In our epistle for this second Sunday after the Epiphany, the Apostle Paul gives us a list of things Jesus would have us do. He says:

*Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who*

*rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be conceited.*

You can only do what St Paul urges you to do because you have been grafted into the church; joined to the body of Christ when you were drowned in the waters of Holy Baptism and made a child of God through that sacrament. Only here in the church, the bride of Christ, can we do what Christ would have us to do. St Mary is right. *“Do whatever He tells you to do.”* And for you who are baptized and believe in Him, what is it that Jesus tells you to do?

*“Take, Eat. This is My body which is given for you, this do in remembrance of Me... Drink of it all of you. This cup is the new testament in my blood which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.”*

He gifts you to do what He tells you to do by gifting you with His forgiveness earned on a tree of death so that you might have eternal life. Having gifted you with life, He also gives you the gifts you need to do what He has called you to do here on this earth in this present reality. Having called you to faith in his Word, He sustains you in that faith He will even see you through death. And, all praise to His Holy Name, after you see death, He promises you will see the mountains seep fine wine and the hills will flow with it. He promises a new heaven and a new earth for you who believe in Him, He who makes water into wine, and wine into His most precious blood, shed for you to pay for your sins, to give you His forgiveness. Rejoice that Christ has covered your sins with His blood and gives to you (even today), the wine of gladness to renew your faith through the power of His eternal Word.

Weddings are exciting things. And the ordinary time of the church is no ordinary time, for in it we await the coming of the eternal Bridegroom, whose coming is soon, so these are exciting times. And as we wait, He gives us here and now a foretaste of the eternal feast to come. So Come now and feast on bread made His body by His Word. And come now and drink that wine made His holy precious blood, by the power of His Holy Word, given and shed for you for the forgiveness of all your sins. Christ's death pays for all your sins. Jesus' resurrection assures you of eternal life. His Holy Spirit calls you to this faith through His Word. Come to His table. Do what he tells you to do. Receive His body and blood, given for the baptized, to you who believe in Him, for the forgiveness of your sins.

In nomine Jesu

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