

Grace and peace are yours in abundance in your knowledge of God and your Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

God’s Word comes to us today in John 2: “This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.”

How many signs did you pass on the way to church today? Quite a few, at any rate. There are street signs, traffic signs, businesses, advertisements, electronic signs. In some places you can be so bombarded by signage that someone gets paid to twirl a sign around, so that you’ll notice. It can be frustrating—or worse—when a sign is not very clear or is just flat out wrong. The best signs grab your attention and give accurate information. A couple weeks ago, a fellow pastor had a lot of nice things to say about our church sign out front. He felt it made a positive first impression.

If the best signs give accurate information in an attractive way, then it’s worth asking, what is the information that you get about Jesus from his first sign? Remember, that’s what John called Jesus’ miracle at the wedding. At first, this might seem like a strange, almost trivial use of his power. I mean, Jesus would go on to heal the diseased, battle demons, and even raise his friend Lazarus from the dead. What he does at the wedding just seems to save a couple from social embarrassment. They run out of wine, so Jesus makes more, problem solved. It’s nice of Jesus to do this, but if it’s a sign, what’s the message?

The message is that Jesus is the Lord of the Feast. He is the Life of the Party. You are invited to eat and drink with Him and experience the fullness of love—and that’s not just for some future time. You can be at His table today. That’s quite a sign, isn’t it?

Chances are you have attended a wedding reception before, so it’s not that hard to imagine Jesus sitting at a similar celebration here in John 2. He’s surrounded by laughter and food and people having a good time. But evidently, His thoughts are far away. I say that because of this little exchange between Jesus and his mother. He seems preoccupied when Mary comes to him with the news that they’ve run out of wine. He’s pretty short with her, I mean, he doesn’t call her Mom, he says, Woman! Why? He tells us. “My hour has not yet come.” My hour has not yet come. All throughout the Gospel of John, Jesus keeps talking about “his hour,” and you know what he’s talking about? It’s always a reference to the hour of his most intense suffering and finally his death. In chapter 12 Jesus says, “Now my soul is troubled and what should I say? Father, save me from this hour? But for this purpose I have come to this hour.”

Jesus is sitting at this wedding feast thinking about the hour of his suffering and death—which sounds very odd until you realize: this is the price he must pay to win *His* bride. And don’t let that language bother you. It’s entirely Biblical. We have one example in today’s Old Testament lesson from Isaiah 62, beautiful words: “As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall God rejoice over you.” Or Ephesians 5, where Paul writes “Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, to make her belong to God, having cleansed her by the

washing of water with the Word..." All of us, together, are the "bride" that Jesus suffered and died for. The Biblical picture is: Jesus is the Groom and the Church is the Bride, brought together by His sacrificial, self-giving love and total commitment to us.

If you look carefully at this sign, you'll see how He brings us together. He is going to do all the work, and He is going to give you all the credit. Take a look. Jesus uses His creative power to change about 150 gallons of ceremonial water into wine. In verse 9, the wedding reception coordinator comes to the groom and says, "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." Now did you notice? Jesus doesn't barge into this conversation and say, "Well, you know, I'm really the one responsible for the good wine." He lets this groom receive the credit. He lets the glory pass to the groom. By doing this, John says in verse 11 that Jesus manifested His glory. Jesus manifested his glory, he made it obvious and clear, by letting someone else get the glory. That is exactly how it works in his kingdom. That's what the Gospel is! Jesus put in the work; lived the perfect life; gave the ultimate sacrifice, the blood, sweat and tears were all His, yet He lets you have His glory. He delights over you like a groom delights in his bride.

At Cana, Jesus doesn't just save a wedding party. This sign shows that *wherever* He is, there is a party! Wherever Jesus is, there is a Feast! There is celebration and festival joy! Jesus does all the work, and you get all the glory. He throws his arms around you in the water of Baptism and serves you wine and bread for your forgiveness. He rejoices over you like a groom watching his beautiful bride walking down the aisle. And what I want you to know is that this Feast is available now, today, at the table of the Lord. It's a real, live experience of the love of Jesus.

See, it's one thing to hear about honey, for example. Someone might describe honey to you, and because of their description, you know and agree that honey is supposed to be sweet. But it's another thing entirely to put some honey on a spoon and taste it for yourself. The first is a report and the second is an experience. In Holy Communion, the Lord of the Feast offers you an experience of His love; love that knows no limits.

Many of us are bearing burdens right now. Your fear, your pain, your grief; it's a constant companion. You may not feel very joyful today, and truthfully you may not have felt that for some time. If that's true, please listen. I'm not saying that life with Jesus is only a celebration all the time. I am saying that in the middle of your heartache, Jesus brings you into His Feast. He gives himself to you. He lets his glory pass to you. And someday, the Feast will continue forever, and it's all that you will know. That's not just a report—Jesus offers you an experience of His healing love today. It's right here, in the Supper.

It was all there in Jesus' first sign. "O taste and see that the Lord is good."