

READ THE TEXT

This story reminds me of a visit I once made to the home of a man in Vancouver, WA.

During the visit he took me to his basement
and showed me an assortment of glass jugs connected with rubber tubes.

The jugs were filled with different colored liquids – purple, red, and pale yellow.

“I’m making wine!” he said proudly.

“This is grape. Over here is blackberry. That one is dandelion.”

It was interesting to see how the wine was made.

Even more interesting to see what this hobby did for the man himself.

It showed me a side of him I had not often seen before.

Usually he was an intense, very businesslike fellow, whose face was creased
with worry lines.

But here in his basement, he was relaxed and smiling – a WINEMAKER!

John’s Gospel takes us on a similar journey this morning.

John invites us to another home
to see another WINEMAKER at work.

Look closely, says John, and you will see
that this wine-making is a SIGN – an Epiphany pointer
that shows you something glorious about this Winemaker.

The GOAL of this sermon
is that this story about Jesus
will show you a side of Him not often seen or spoken about.

Notice, first, where Jesus is when He makes the wine.

He’s at a WEDDING... as a GUEST.

That’s a little surprising, isn’t it?

For we often picture Jesus as a man constantly on RELIGIOUS DUTY –
If He isn't preaching at the synagogue,
He's busy teaching at the Temple.
If he isn't on a hillside feeding a multitude
He's making house calls on the crippled and the sick.

But not today!

It's not a "work day" but a day for fun, for merriment.

He's at a party.

He had received a wedding invitation and – guess what? – He came!

The bride and groom – so we gather – were not celebrities.
The wedding wouldn't make the society pages in Jerusalem.
The Sanhedrin paid no heed.
Herod was busy elsewhere.

But Jesus came... and isn't that a glorious thing?

He's the very Son of God, yet He is interested in ordinary people.

It's still that way.

Nothing in your life or mine escapes His interest or His care.

A baby's first steps.

The promotion you got at work.

Your score on a test.

And, yes, as this story makes clear, our romances, courtships, and
weddings!

Having been through a family wedding of our own last summer, I'm
specially interested in this story.

Let me draw your attention to the fact that the family made a point to INVITE HIM.

Does He receive such an invitation into our homes? Our lives?

"Come, Lord, Jesus, be OUR guest...
at this meal, in this marriage, in this new home, in this hospital stay."

What a difference it would make if Jesus were INVITED!

And that brings us to a **SECOND** surprising thing about Jesus in this story...
The difference He made that day was that... **HE MADE WINE!**

He did not preach a wedding sermon.
He did not heal any sick guests.
He did not present a gilt-edged book of Bible verses to the couple!

HE MADE WINE... wine of the highest quality!
If you had not heard this story before, would that fact surprise you?

Wine. Such an earthy, fleshly sort of thing.

Not a necessity, but an “extra.”
People drink **WATER** to survive. They drink **WINE** to have a good time.

That’s exactly why he made it.
WINE IS FOR JOY... and so is Jesus!

We who make our **RELIGION** into such a sober, serious, life-or-death matter
would do well to take note of this.

I am preaching to myself, you know –
I who am often urged by you to lighten up, to mellow out,
to stop taking myself and life so seriously...

Now you have a Bible story to hold before my wrinkled brow, and I before
yours!

One of the great Christians in the Middle Ages was **TERESA OF AVILA**.
Teresa disliked gloomy Christians. One of her frequent prayers was,
“**LORD, DELIVER US FROM THE FROWNING SAINTS!**”

There were frowning saints in Jesus’ day
who criticized Him for having a good time.
They called Him “glutton” and “drunkard” – a “wine-bibber,” a
“good time Charlie”

Are there any “frowning saints” among us?

Any of us have a hard time laughing in church,
especially if we must laugh at ourselves?

Any who regard the presence of small children in church as a bother,
especially if they giggle or cry or kick the seat we're sitting in?

Any who come to Holy Communion (that happiest of all meals!) as if
it were Christ's FUNERAL instead of the celebration of His
LIVING PRESENCE?

Jesus became a WINEMAKER in order to become a JOY-MAKER...

What would He think of children in church?
of new songs on cool guitars?
of smiles shared at the Communion rail?

I think you know!

Jesus came for JOY. How can we frown in His presence?

His making of the wine tells us something else about Him...
HE HAD COMPASSION.
He cared deeply about people's needs.

The reason He had to make wine was simple: they had run out.

For that family it was an embarrassing moment.
A wedding was an important SOCIAL EVENT,
and it was the family's duty to supply food and drink for all the guests.

To run out of wine?
Unthinkable! A social blunder of the first order.
The whole family would be ashamed.

The first person to notice was Mary, His mother.

There in the midst of the crowd of people busy laughing and talking and eating
she pulled Jesus aside with an anxious whisper:
"THEY HAVE NO WINE!"

She did not need to say more.
She did not tell Him what to do, for she knew Him.
She knew He would do something.

Do we know Him like she did?

Are we convinced, like she was, that no matter what we bring Him,
we can count on Him to care and to ACT?

This story makes clear that Jesus cares about such things as social embarrassments, and about all the little things that can go wrong and make us fretful...

like when the car breaks down,
or when you burn an expensive roast,
or when you forget an appointment.

And surely a Savior who cares about our EMBARRASSMENTS
can be counted on even more when we face the larger burdens life brings:
divorce and unemployment,
addiction and depression,
sin and death.

He CARES, but can He really HELP?

We know He has a heart...does He also have the power to make a difference?

That brings us to a last observation about this story – how he MAKES THE WINE:

Not from grape juice, but from plain WATER.

No fancy rubber tubing, glass jars, sugar, or yeast.
The only equipment this winemaker needs is a few stone pots
to hold the water.

Nor does it take Him years...or even months!
It happens in only a few astonishing MOMENTS –
as the servants carry the water to the steward.

In those few moments, He turns water into wine.

Only GOD could do that. Only a divine sort of POWER could work such a thing.

And that's who this WINEMAKER is. God with us.

And this miracle became the “first of the signs” that alerted attentive people
to the identity of this carpenter from Nazareth.

It was the first...but certainly not the LAST!

What He does here is what He is always doing with people:
taking ORDINARY and making it EXTRAORDINARY.

In this story it was WATER.

“How can water help at a time like this?”
the servants might have wondered.
But they dipped in and did what he commanded,
and the steward tasted sparkling new WINE.

“How can water do such great things?”
we might say as we stand beside that small, aluminum bowl
in the baptismal font.
But we plunge in, trusting Him
and we emerge, changed from SINNERS into SAINTS.

And there's WINE itself.

Three years later, on a fateful Thursday night, Jesus would raise a cup of
ordinary table wine
and utter some stupendous words:
“This is the new covenant in my blood.”

Each time we come to the Communion rail,
ordinary table wine becomes the vehicle for the EXTRAORDINARY blessing
of His very blood!

John ends his story abruptly.

The steward and the groom are left standing there, baffled at this strange turn of events.

But the servants who drew the water know what has happened.
So do the disciples.

And it is in THEM that the greater change takes place:
Jesus... manifested his glory... and His disciples BELIEVED IN HIM.

That, after all, is the greater miracle...
not what he did with water,
but what He did...and still does... with PEOPLE. You and Me!

Here is a story that summons us to faith.

Will you believe that Jesus is interested in all the facets of your life?

Will you believe that He has destined you for an abundant, over-flowing JOY?

Will you give Him the insipid WATER of your daily life
and let Him make of it a NEW WINE?

It happens anywhere that people take Him at His word.
It can happen here.

Will you believe in Him?

The WINEMAKER is waiting.