

A Wedding in Cana:
The Marriage of Heaven and Earth

Grace Episcopal Church
2nd Sunday after Epiphany
Rev. Brian C Justice

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Isaiah 62.1-5
Psalm 36.5-10
1 Corinthians 12.1-11
John 2.1-11

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O Holy and Incarnate God, you are right here.
Open our hearts and minds
that we might find you right here.
Amen.

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A wedding in Cana.

But what marriage took place there?

The author of the Fourth Gospel does not say. But when Jesus commands the servants to fill the jars with water and then the steward draws wine from the jars, we realize ...
this is no ordinary wedding ... this is a different kind of marriage.

This is the Epiphany.

This is the meaning of the Incarnation of God.

And this changes everything for you and me.

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This liturgical season is called Epiphany, which translates literally from the Greek as ‘a showing over.’

On a literal level, it is a reference to the Star of Bethlehem ‘showing over’ the land of Judah, leading the Three Kings of the East to ‘the child who has been born King of the Jews.’

On a theological level, it is a reference to God ‘showing over’ the universe in the life of Jesus of Nazareth.

The Epiphany – symbolized in the Star of Bethlehem – is the light of the presence of God ... in space, in time, in history, in humanity, in matter.

The Epiphany is the immanent reality of God. Right here. Right now.

This is what we prepare for in Advent and what we celebrate in Christmas ... that ‘the home of God is among mortals’ (Rev 21.3), that ‘God is love’ (1 John 4.16), and that this reality shines forth – like the light from a star – in the life of Jesus of Nazareth.

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During the season of Epiphany, the lectionary (that is, the schedule of readings) appoints the following readings from the Gospels:

Epiphany: the journey of the Three Kings under the Star of Bethlehem

1st Sunday after Epiphany: the baptism of Jesus

2nd Sunday: the wedding in Cana

3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th Sundays: the beginning of the public ministry of Jesus

So, why is the story of the wedding in Cana – which is the only reading from the Gospel of John in Epiphany – interposed in what is otherwise an orderly narrative of the life of Jesus? (Why do we jump from the Baptism of Jesus in Luke to the wedding in Cana in John back to the beginning of the ministry of Jesus in Luke?)

It is because the whole meaning of the life of Jesus – the whole meaning of God – is revealed in this story.

The story is simple. On the surface.

Mary, Jesus, and the disciples attend a wedding in Cana, which is a village in Galilee. The author never says who the Bride and the Bridegroom are. When the wine is exhausted during the celebration, Jesus instructs the servants to fill the six stone jars with water. And these are *massive* jars, each holding twenty – thirty gallons of liquid. But when the steward draws from them, he discovers that they are filled with wine.

The water has become wine!

Do you see?

The ordinary has become extraordinary. The secular has become sacred.

The wedding in Cana is more than the marriage of two young lovers (as if that is not wonderful enough!).

The wedding in Cana is nothing less than the marriage of heaven and earth ... *the marriage of heaven and earth* ... the sacramental union of the spiritual and the physical.

This is why this story is read in Epiphany: it shows the meaning of the Incarnation. It shows what it means to say ‘and the Word became flesh and lived among us’ (John 1.14).

God is an immanent God. God is known in the flesh, in the physical body, in the material reality of Jesus of Nazareth. And, thus, God is known in and through and under material reality itself. The Creator is known in the creation. This means that matter, the physical world, the stuff of the universe, is changed, is charged, is transfigured by real divine presence.

When, at Cana, ‘ordinary’ water becomes ‘extraordinary’ wine, the steward, the disciples, and the wedding guests – and hopefully you and I – see what this signifies ...

Physical things are the vessels of spiritual reality.

Look at the things in our liturgy ... water, metal, fire, wood, paper, ink, glass, bread, wine, the human voice, the human hand ... *this* is where we meet God. *This* is where we encounter the divine. God is both *in* and *beyond* all things. So ...

There is nothing that is not holy. Everything is holy. Everything is sacred.

Nothing can negate the incarnate reality of God. In our sorrows and in our joys, God *is there*.

In sickness, in suffering, in Covid, in jail, in unemployment, in a loss, in a death ... God is there.

In a birth, in a conversation with friends, in a new job, in a wedding, in the beauty of song and story, in a piece of bread and a glass of wine ... God is there.

Jesus, the Son of Man and the Son of God, shows us that the earth is shot through with heaven.

The wedding in Cana ... the marriage of heaven and earth ... you and I are invited ... would you like to go?

Amen.