

Sermon for the Second Sunday after Epiphany

'Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come.'

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The Mother of our Lord comes to her son, for there is a problem.

A wedding is to be a joyous occasion, or at least, a delirious occasion. A man and a woman are joined together, and the two are made one. It is the pivotal event in the lives of most, and without doubt the only pivotal event in the lives of those in ancient times, a much more honest, earthy time, where concrete realities reign.

The most concrete reality that all must face if they are alive is the fact that they will also die, and not only themselves, but everyone about them. The entire human race has a clock on them, and unless something is done, humanity is over in the passing of a couple dozen years, so ephemeral are we.

Against the abyss, man has been given one weapon: to marry, and to have children. This alone assures that our lives do not vanish as a drop of rain into the ocean, that our work has continued significance, that our memories live on in the mouths of others, if not in our own children, then in the children of others.

So it is that a marriage was not merely a happy occasion, but a raucous one, a victorious triumph, a riot and rebellion against the darkness of death and eternal forgetting that at all and every time threatens the undifferentiated mass of mankind.

And yet there is a problem, and so the Ever Blessed Mother approaches the Lord: *'they have no wine.'*

The Lord seems annoyed, even sneering, and rebukes His own mother: *'Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come.'*

What is this hour? This is not something about which St. John the Evangelist would have us guess, for it is written that, enraged at His seeming blasphemies, the Jews *'sought to take him, yet no man laid his hand on him, for his hour was not yet come.'* And again, *'these words Jesus said as he taught in the temple; and no man took him, for his hour was not yet come.'*

His hour is none other than the hour of His glory; His hour is none other than the hour of His death. And this hour *is not yet come.*

So He reprimands the woman, *'what does this have to do with me?'* She bothers Him over a matter of careless merry-making; does she not know the Christ's concern lies elsewhere, in His labor, and Passion, and death? In His conquest of Satan and victory over hell? Which is to say, in His hour? Mary dwells on passing, worldly things, and their going. The things of Christ and the kingdom of Heaven, and its coming.

And yet, Holy Mary does not seem to agree. She does not even seem to take offense at being derided as merely *'woman'* by her own child. Rather, accepting the title of her first mother from the son of the first man, she simply turns and commands the others, *'do whatever he tells you.'*

If it is the case that Christ meant to tell her off, she certainly did not take it that way. Nor does her son Jesus seem to have meant her to, for Jesus, *seeing six jars,* orders them to be filled with water. Though it may not be His hour, indeed, He acts, as it is written: *'for Zion's sake, I will not keep silent.'*

And of course, He must, for nothing has more to do with Him, and with His hour, His Passion and death, than the taking of water, and the giving of wine; of baptism in the Jordan, and the New Testament in His blood.

Six jars of water are set before Him, water meant for the ritual purification of the Jews; six jars, one short of completion. *'Draw from this'* He commands, *'and take it to the master of the feast.'* For, as it is written, this shall be *the first of his signs,* though *first,* is not a correct translation, but rather, *principal,* the *chief,* the *rule of his signs,* the one sign by which all His other works are to be understood.

For the time of sign and symbol is over; the reality of Christ is come. No longer will the Jews wash their bodies with water in hope of the inner washing away of

sin; for the Holy Spirit has descended upon the Lord in the river, and now this water He will give to all who believe, that it may become within them a living spring, purifying not their hands, but their hearts.

No longer shall water fill earthen vessels as breath filled man when he was formed from the dust. *'New wine must fill new wineskins,'* for though men were washed with water to be purified according to the Law, with blood was the altar of the Temple sated, according to the righteousness of God. Now wine must fill the jars set before the Lord, as blood must fill the cup of which the Christ must drink; the cup which the Lord must suffer; and the cup which the Lord must fill, that we may *take and drink, for the forgiveness of sins. This new testament in his blood.*

The Son will be scourged, mocked, and in every way tortured, that like a lamb to the slaughter, or a bull to be sacrificed, He may be hung up upon the wood; that He there might be pierced, and from His side come *water, and blood, a spring welling up from within unto eternal life.* For indeed, this is His glory, and His hour, and now, at this wedding, when death is mocked through the children of men, His sign is given, the first, and the chief: the giving of the wine, which will be His blood, that death forever be abolished by the Son of God.

'Now take some of the wine and give it to the master of the feast.'

'And when the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, he called the bridegroom and said to him, "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."'

For indeed, from the time of Adam's sin, the Father has drunk bitter water, even the iniquity of His people; but the Son has kept the best wine, His very blood, to be offered by the wood cast in the pool of Mara, until this latter day; *for the last shall be first, but the first, last. His hour;* the joy and triumph of the true wedding feast, when the Son will cry out, *'Father, the hour is come! Glorify thy son!'*

This the Lord did in Cana of Galilee,

'The first of the signs.'

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Preached by Pastor Fields

Sermon Texts: Isaiah 62:1-5; 1 Corinthians 12:1-11; John 2:1-11.