

Text: John 2:1-11. (HCSB)

Second Sunday of Epiphany.

January 10, 2016.

Grace and peace are yours through Jesus, who displays his glory to us. Amen.

Do you think God gives signs today? Whom am I supposed to marry? Will God write it in the clouds? Should I look for a new job or be happy with the one I have? Will God send the angel Gabriel to tell me the message? How do I know which college to attend, or maybe not go to college at all? Will God just give me a feeling? For those of you who are a little more mature, you can probably point to times in your life when God did some amazing things to show you the way or to confirm your decision. After we bought the house we live in, the home inspector wrote a note on the bottom of the inspection. In the payment section. It said, "Paid in full by Jesus!" With a smiley face. I called up and asked, "Are you really saying we don't owe you anything for the inspection?" He said, "Yes. The realtor told me you are a pastor and I wanted to do this to show Jesus' love." Is that a sign? Maybe. I wish everything had signs like that.

But for the most important thing, God didn't leave it to temporary writing in the clouds that would soon pass away. God put the sign in his Word, which will never pass away. For the one sign that is for everyone, Jesus didn't send one messenger. He has sent thousands of messengers over thousands of years. The most important sign isn't up to our feelings. The most important sign points to Jesus! Jesus is our Savior. Jesus is the Messiah. Jesus is the one God chose and anointed to take away our sins. The signs Jesus performed confirm, "I am the one. Don't look for another." Jesus displayed his glory. His disciples believed in him. The signs point to Jesus. In fact, all signs point to Jesus. All signs point to Jesus.

So, here's the situation. Jesus, his mother Mary, and six of Jesus' disciples are at a wedding. It was rude to turn down an invitation and the reception lasted one week, sometimes even longer. Sweet party. Well, then something more rude happened. They ran out of wine. Uh oh.

Mary, Jesus' mother, comes to him with the simple statement, "They don't have any wine." Now, we could have a discussion about what Mary meant. Let's not say too little or too much. Maybe it was just a statement. Maybe Mary wasn't expecting Jesus to do anything. But then why did Jesus kind of scold her a little in his reply? Maybe it was a statement like after supper, on a Monday, you tell the person whose job it is to take out the garbage on Monday. "It's Monday." And the clear implication is, "Remember to take out the garbage." Maybe that was Mary's statement. Maybe not. Remember, Jesus hadn't done any miracles yet. So why expect the first one now, for a seemingly small thing like wine at a wedding? Remember, Jesus spoke harshly to those who demanded signs. Jesus condemned them for their unbelief. Jesus doesn't do that here.

Jesus speaks politely and with respect. But he also is firm. "What has this concern of yours to do with me, woman?" We are not on the same page here. Mary, I'm your son second. I'm God's Son first. He doesn't harshly condemn, but he also politely rebukes. My hour has not yet come. The time is not yet right for me to display my glory. I will display my glory when it's God's time, not your time. My hour has not yet come.

Can't you see yourself in Mary? You love Jesus. You believe in Jesus. You know Jesus can fix it. You go to him. You pray to him. Jesus, would you hurry up already! Jesus! I'm sick of being sick. Can't you just heal me now! Jesus, I'm tired of fighting. Everyone else at work tells those jokes. I don't like them. I try to stay away. Why are they so happy and I'm so miserable? My hour has not yet come. Jesus, I'm just

weary. Everything in your world, that you say you love so much, is turning against you. Why don't you fix it? Why don't you make people believe in you? Why don't you do something? My hour has not yet come.

Do you know how Jesus used this phrase most often, "My hour has not yet come"? To talk about his suffering, death and resurrection. Jesus' hour did come. When the time was right for him, Jesus suffered, wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities. When his hour did come, Jesus died. The punishment that brought us peace was upon him. Jesus didn't die when his enemies decided, Jesus died when Jesus decided. Even at the very end of his life, Jesus bowed his head and gave up his spirit. When the time was just right, for God, God sent his Son. When the time was just right, for God, God had his Son suffer and die for all our sins. And when the time was just right, for God, God raised his Son from the dead and yelled loud and clear, "This is the Savior!" When the time was just right, for Jesus, Jesus performed this sign, displayed his glory. All signs point to Jesus, none more clearly than the cross, the empty tomb. All signs point to Jesus.

But notice, even before Jesus did the sign, he had to change Mary's attitude to accept Jesus' timing for the sign and allow Jesus to perform the sign in his way. After Jesus' respectful rebuke, Mary simply says, "Do whatever he tells you." And so we say, "Jesus, I trust your timing for healing. And even if the hour for relief is the day I leave this earth, I'll do whatever you tell me. Jesus, maybe you are letting the world get more evil so my light can shine more brightly and so my trust in you and my following your words can be a sharper contrast. Maybe you are giving me the opportunity to stand up for you and speak up for you. Maybe you will use me to change a heart or two or five. Maybe you just want to change my heart to trust more deeply in you. Whatever you tell me, I'll do Lord, because the signs point to you. You are my Savior. The signs point to you. I'm not looking at or for anyone else."

Hearts changed, attitudes aligned, timing right, Jesus performs the first sign. We read what happened. Water into wine. Did you notice the details? The more I study the signs Jesus performed, the more I am struck by the details. This was no fluke or accident or people started pulling wine out of their travel mugs. Look at the size of these containers. 20 to 30 gallons each! And there were six! (One for each disciple present which is kind of an interesting fact.) Picture a fifty gallon drum. Now picture three! Now all of them filled, all the way to the very top, with wine. I know there are some people here who enjoy wine. Quit drooling. Instantly, not after some long process, but immediately. It was the finest wine. The stuff you brought out first. The very best. Wine is used in the Bible as a picture of abundance. Grapes took a long time to grow. Wine pictured hope and joy. And even, one of the scenes of heaven pictures the finest of wines, all for free. Every detail adds to the sign. All signs point to Jesus.

Why did Jesus perform this sign? Was it to save a couple some social embarrassment? Was it to provide a generous wedding gift? The Bible points to a different, a much higher reason. He performed this sign to display his glory. To display his glory. Jesus wanted to give his followers, that what disciples are, a little glimpse of his glory. He wanted this little glimpse of his glory to help them connect the dots. If only God can do miracles and Jesus does miracles, then Jesus is God. If God sent his Son to be our Savior and God would point out this Savior with signs, miracles and wonders, then this Jesus must be God's Son and must be our Savior. This wasn't glory for a merely earthly purpose. This was glory for a heavenly purpose. This sign was bright neon, flashing arrow, right above Jesus, for all with faith to see, "Jesus is the Savior." All signs point to Jesus.

The disciples, who usually take a lot of flak for their slowness to believe and their silly arguments, got this one. They saw the sign. They saw the display of glory. They believed in him. It's kind of cool to note that the lowest saw the sign first. The servants who drew the water, they knew it was just water they put into those big stone jars. The chief servant didn't know. The disciples, ordinary fishermen, they saw the sign. Jesus didn't do this sign in Jerusalem in Judea, the political and religious center of the world for all the rulers and priest to see. Jesus did this sign in Cana, in Galilee, for a few regular guys and some nameless newlyweds.

Maybe, just maybe, that helps us see the connection between faith and miracles. Ok, we might think, "If Jesus just did some miracles, more people would believe." Well, Jesus did miracles and lot of people still didn't believe. Even here, when it says, "His disciples believed in him." Don't think, "These guys never had any faith before and instantly as the water changed to wine their hearts changed from unbelief to faith. These were Jesus' disciples. They were already following him. They already had faith. This sign strengthened their faith. It confirmed their faith. I had already bought the house. That note confirmed it. The sequence is not sign, then faith. The sequence is faith, then sign, then stronger faith. The sign pointed to Jesus. The sign displayed his glory. The sign strengthened their faith in him.

And all this from a taste test. Just one taste test, by one chief servant, and the glory displayed, the faith strengthened. Today, you also get a chance for a taste test. It's a little different. But there will be wine. Today, you can get a chance to taste test, Vine and Branches. Vine and Branches is our small group, in home, sermon based Bible discussions that help us grow closer to Jesus, and grow closer to each other. It has been a great blessing for those who have done it. I've had many people say, "I've heard about Vine and Branches. I can't miss the big sign, but I don't really know what it is. Is there any way I can try it out?" And believe me, I've prayed and asked advice and tried to get help. Well, finally the hour has come. Today, you get to taste test Vine and Branches. Right after worship, in the entryway and fellowship hall, there will be refreshments, that's how Vine and Branches gatherings start. People will talk, laugh, enjoy being together. That's how Vine and Branches continues. Then we'll gather to discuss the sermon some more. We'll start with the questions for further discussion in the service folder. You can comment if you want you. You can listen if that's more your style. That's part of Vine and Branches. We'll pray for each other. We'll be done by the time your children finish Sunday School. I know we can't replicate everything in this taste test. It won't be a small group. It will be a big one. It won't be in home. It will be here at church. But there will be fun and fellowship. There will be sermon discussion. There will be Vine and Branches members ready and willing to answer your questions and give really cool testimonials about how Vine and Branches has helped them grow closer to Jesus, closer to each other and bear much fruit. You'll also have the chance after the taste test to sign up, if you want. No pressure. But we pray that the taste test will want you tasting more. Amen.