

January 26, 2025

**'Jesus at the Party'**

Isaiah 62:1-5; John 2:1-12

Introduction

- It's fitting that we're beginning with a celebration in our reading today as we're celebrating a bit today as well.
  - o Although ours is more bittersweet than this one, we're celebrating an employee of over 31 years.
    - She's leaving us in retirement.
- Celebrations are such wonderful things
  - o Every time I read this passage, I'm transported back to Natalie and I's wedding day.
    - We were married real nearby, The First Presbyterian Church of Mount Holly, NC.
      - It was a bliss filled affair with lots of friends and family coming on a really pretty June morning.
        - o We got the best weather y'all not too hot, perfect.
- Everything had gone perfectly, too.
  - o The parties and the receptions had been delightful, now all that was left was to get hitched.
- Tell the events of the wedding, focusing especially on the ring with Taylor, the ring-bearer.
  - o The pastor, an Eagle Scout, had on him a pocket knife, he cut the rings off the pillow and we were back in business.
- That was a wedding faux pas.
  - o They happen all the time, they're the little details you remember that weren't perfect about your marriage that, over time, become the perfect reminders that the event was real and didn't just happen in your imagination.
    - There was about to be a serious wedding faux pas at this time in our Scripture reading.

Weddings in the Jewish World at the Time.

- We tend to think of weddings as BIG events but we have no idea, really.
- Back then, a wedding was a central festival in the life of a family.
- They were considered to be blessings that required work and dedication to pull off.
- For example, a typical wedding feast in the time was expected to go on for a week.
  - o A week of feasting, dancing and, of course, drinking wine.
- These events were generally hosted by a master of celebrations which we meet here in our passage.
  - o The family worked to make sure the revelry lasted the entire time.
  - o If it didn't there were actual legal measures that the bride's family could take
    - They could sue over this.
      - So, this wasn't only a cultural taboo, it was a civic legal problem potentially as well.
- The weddings were supposed to come off without a hitch but, as we know, there was a serious faux pas.
  - o The groom's parents have run out of wine prematurely.
    - As we've said, this is a grave error, one that could potentially lead to a lot of heartache and hassles.
- So, there is a crisis and something needs to be done.

Mary

- Jesus' mother, Mary, takes it upon herself to alert Jesus to the potential problem.
  - o This makes sense on a number of levels.
    - First, Jesus is an adult,
      - As we see our kids mature, we allow them to take on more until, as we get older, they take on everything for themselves.
        - o It's understandable Mary drafts her son into the problem.
    - But, also, Mary knows something.

- Remember the angelic announcements, the visitors of the shepherds and the wisemen?
  - Mary knows Jesus is special, the Messiah even.
    - So, she goes to Him, knowing the kind of power He's invested with.
- Mary may have had some official role in this wedding, I read a lot about that this week
  - Perhaps her involvement signals that she's an official in the ceremony or something
    - What we do know is that she cares,
      - Doesn't want the family to be embarrassed.

#### Jesus' Response

- Jesus at first doesn't seem that interested in helping.
- Now, He calls her woman, instead of Mom.
  - That's culturally appropriate, this is not Jesus being dismissing, it is in fact Him being quite formal and polite with his mother.
- Jesus' reply indicates that it's not "his hour yet."
  - What does he mean by that.
  - Well, in the Gospel of John, Jesus is going to talk about this a fair amount and when he does, what he's speaking about is the Passion.
    - His crucifixion is the hour of which he speaks.
      - What he's telling his Mom is that his time to be revealed fully as the Messiah has not yet come.
        - Jesus knows how the story is supposed to God,
          - Revealing himself here is NOT The plan.
- But Jesus improvises, anyway.
  - He orders the stewards to fill the stone jars with water.

#### Stone Jars

- So, what were the stone jars and why were they there in the first place?
- The Bible makes mention of cleaning hands and feet before eating but, over time, the Jews had added to the laws in the Bible requiring all sorts of extra activities.
  - Ceremonially cleaning utensils and vessels wasn't Biblical but was being done nevertheless.
- So, these stone jars were there to do something unnecessary for God.
- Jesus tells the people to fill them to the brim with water.
- The number six,
  - Whereas the number seven signals completion of fullness in the Jewish world of the time, the number six represented shortfall.
    - That there were only six signals that there is a deficiency here.
      - It is a deficiency of number and of potency.
        - But Jesus fixes both.
- Once the servants had filled the jars, Jesus summons that some of the liquid be taken to the master of ceremonies.
  - Then, the second thing I always think of when I read this passage comes to mind.
    - I was in a fraternity. Years ago, at Carolina. Theta Chi, believe it or not.
    - We had a thing that we did for our parties.
      - 1 keg of Budweiser, several kegs of Schaffer Light (a much cheaper beer)
    - We served the "Good wine" first, so I know exactly what the steward is saying.
- When the master of ceremonies is taken the wine, he calls for the bridegroom.
  - He announces that no one does this,
    - The good wine, LAST?
      - That's symbolic, by the way,
        - What Jesus is telling us is that the end is going to be better than the beginning.

- This is a huge theological point.
- The BEST comes LAST
  - This is hard to fathom sometimes as beginnings are such precious things.
  - But the Christian belief is that something so wonderfully good is coming, that all things will be healed by it in the end.
- I don't want to go too far down a theological trail here but this announcement relates to the coming Kingdom.
  - What we believe about the end of time,
    - God is going to wrap this up.
    - New heavens and a new earth.
    - No more sickness, no more dying, no more tears.
      - That's what's coming at the end.
        - So, no matter how good life is now, it will be better in the Kingdom of God.
- **Isaiah 255:6-9** - *On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined. <sup>7</sup>And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations.<sup>8</sup> He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken.<sup>9</sup> It will be said on that day, "Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation."*
- When Jesus comes again, all will be well and all matters of things shall be well.

What this passage teaches us:

- Invite Jesus into your life.
  - Jesus was just one of many wedding guests that day but, He really saves the day, doesn't He?
  - We need to do the same.
  - Invite Jesus into your life and see how the world changes.
- Rededication
  - New year is a great time to be deliberate in inviting Jesus back into your life.
    - In prayer, give your life back to Jesus today. Why waste any time, invite Him back in for 2025 and make this the year that you'll grow in Jesus.
      - Find the joy of sanctification.
- Make room for his presence.
  - This is the hard part.
    - Many of us are leading really full lives, the thought of taking in more anything doesn't seem like a great idea.
      - But it is with Jesus, make room.
        - I know tik tok came back but that's something we might move aside for more time with Jesus, right?
  - **Revelation 3:20** - Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.
  - **Proverbs 3:6** – *"In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths."*