

"See a need, fill a need" John 2:1-11 Epiphany 2 2022

When there arose a need, Jesus fulfilled it - even such a need as wine for a wedding party.

This is truly an amazing account of the life of our Lord, loaded with lessons for us and our lives—now here on earth with each other, and for eternity in heaven with our Lord. And all of these lessons serve one primary purpose—that you will believe and be saved by this Christ, His miraculous power, and His compassionate desire to supply your every need of body and soul.

*And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name. (John 20:30 31)*

But why amidst all the sickness, suffering, and persecution going on all around Him; when both political and religious leaders were domineering, exploiting, enslaving, and even murdering people all around Him; why did Jesus choose such a miracle as His first? How could He turn a blind eye to all of that to help a crowd that probably already had already drunk too much?

For one thing, there is a lesson to be learned about vocation, our calling in life in relation to our neighbor, and how we are to serve him. By this account and the order in which John presents it, Jesus had been

"See a need, fill a need" John 2:1-11 Epiphany 2 2022

invited to this wedding as Mary's son. While at the wedding, the wedding party, the guests, and even the servants made up Jesus' neighborhood at the time. There were reputations, and perhaps even livelihoods at stake here. A failed feast could mean disaster for business and ostracizing in the community for the host, the bride and groom, and the master of the feast, and unemployment without benefit of a government paycheck for the servants.

Jesus was indeed having compassion on them when their need arose. At the same time, He teaches us that that homeless people in the streets of Stratford, starving children in India, hurricane victims in Haiti, or even pagan tribes in third world countries in need of hearing the Gospel are no excuse for us to ignore the needs of those closest to us--let alone a text from a distant BFF or FB message from someone we've never even met. The people with whom we live and work and play and go to school every day, those people within arm's reach and the sound of our voice, the ones whom we see struggling side by side with us and who see us warts and all, those are the people we are primarily here to serve. We are not any holier or more useful to God and the world for expanding our horizons and trying to make a difference if we are ignoring what's going on around us with the flesh and blood people whose lives our behavior most affects. As Luther likes to remind us, the milkmaid milking the cows, the mother nursing her

"See a need, fill a need" John 2:1-11 Epiphany 2 2022

child, the father changing a soiled diaper, is doing as pious a work as the pastor preaching the Word as long as these things are done through and with faith in Christ. All of this is in fact God working to provide daily bread according to His economy of created order to provide for the needs of His people and our neighbors as needs arise.

Furthermore, let us not forget that life, eternal life begins here in this world. Neither let us forget that Jesus Himself is true God and true man--touching and having to do with two worlds - heaven, and earth. So, as we have seen, by this account of the miracle at Cana we learn not to despise the good gifts of God's earthly kingdom according to their intended purpose--sex/marriage/family; food/drink/recreation.

God provides these things according to our needs. We should neither count them for too little or too much. They are not evil for being earthly--it is our sin that curses them and uses them for evil.

- That so many marriages are go bad and end painfully is not the fault of God's gift and so it should not be held in contempt, rejected, or replaced.

- That so many pregnancies are "unwanted" and "inconvenient" is not the fault of the child who has been conceived or the God who has caused the life to begin, it is the sinful will and selfishness of men that deem them as such to justify disposing of them as excess baggage.

"See a need, fill a need" John 2:1-11 Epiphany 2 2022

- That so much harm is caused under the influence of certain beverages does not mean that the beverage is evil--else why would Jesus have provided more after plenty had already been consumed?

These, and indeed all of God's created things are to be cherished and enjoyed for the gifts that they are and the benefits they bring. But none of them should be given inordinate attention, or revered as more than they are—particularly if they take precedence over remembering to keep the Sabbath Day holy and become excuses to despise preaching and God's Word--which simply means to rather be doing something else than receiving God's gift of forgiveness of sins, life, and eternal salvation where and when it is being offered as part of your necessary regular regimen of life.

But what does this have to do with our relationship with God and our life in the kingdom of heaven? Certainly, Jesus didn't come to be our party friend and drinking buddy. And, as wonderful a gift as marriage is for the security and pleasures of companionship and the bearing and rearing of the next generation—as well as all the societal benefits and structure that marriage provides even for those who never themselves become husband or wife--marriage is not the ultimate end and purpose for which we were created. And Jesus answered and said to them, "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage. But

"See a need, fill a need" John 2:1-11 Epiphany 2 2022

those who are counted worthy to attain that age, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; nor can they die anymore, for they are equal to the angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection. Luke 20:34 36

Man and wife are created in God's image, and so marriage reflects the relationship He has with us--forgiveness, forbearance, faithfulness—and models it to the world around us. You see, God always has and always does use earthly/earthy things to convey His heavenly kingdom and spiritual things to us—primarily people, and especially the closest people to us, our family to pass the faith once delivered to them along to us. That's why He created them in the first place. More than likely it was our parents who brought us to the baptismal font and Christ's church to be brought into the kingdom of heaven, taught the faith, and united in the flesh with Christ—all these delivered by Christ's flesh and blood servants and stewards of the feast.

*This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. (1 Corinthians 4:1)*

*he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds] and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, (Ephesians 4:11-13)*

## "See a need, fill a need" John 2:1-11 Epiphany 2 2022

This faith is also a gift of God to us as the need arises. We see it in action here as well, from a rather startling source—Jesus' mother, the Virgin Mary. His mother said to the servants: "whatever he tells you, do it." That is faith. Trusting that what God tells us to do in His Word is good, beneficial, authoritative and dynamic--no matter how insignificant and uncomfortable it may look and feel to us or how inconvenient and costly it might be for us to plan our lives around it.

It may not make sense—words, water, wine—but in these things is not only life, but life eternal because God fills them up just as certainly as He did the water pots. He filled them up using people He called according to His Word & command. It is His Word and work that makes these things and people holy for His use and provides for us abundantly, whenever the need arises—which is always, isn't it?

Yes, when there arose a need, Jesus fulfilled it—even such a need as wine for a wedding party. And as our needs arise day by day, He continues to fulfill them, giving us life abundantly—for here and now in gifts such as marriage and wine, and forever in heaven as He forgives you all of your sins. Amen.