

Study for the Second Sunday after Epiphany (C) – John 2:1-11, 2025.01.19

Imperatives of Discipleship – Believe!

Focus Question: *What gives you strength as you believe in Christ?*

word of life

“Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana in Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.” John 2:11 (NRSV)

Read John 2:1-11

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. ²Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. ³When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.” ⁴And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.” ⁵His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.”

⁶Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. ⁷Jesus said to them, “Fill the jars with water.” And they filled them up to the brim. ⁸He said to them, “Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.” So they took it. ⁹When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom ¹⁰and said to him, “Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now.”

¹¹Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

Scholars of the Gospel of John often speak of the many layers or levels of meaning in its verses; and this story of the wedding in Cana in Galilee is no exception. Many of the words and details are laden with symbolic meaning which the faith community would hear and understand:

- “on the third day” (vs.1) – The resurrection of Jesus came on the beginning of the third day after the cross.
- “my hour has not yet come” (vs. 4) – Jesus’ “hour” in John is his suffering and death on the cross.
- “six stone water jars” (vs. 6) – The number six indicates incompleteness. The stone jars were used for the Jewish rites of purification; yet the contents of the jar were incomplete and inadequate for the occasion. The new wine from Jesus is the choice wine – suggesting that the new revelation of God in Jesus is the fullness of God’s revelation.
- the wedding feast – The wedding feast is used many times in the Old and New Testament as a symbol of the kingdom of God, and the relationship of bride and bridegroom is used as a description of the relationship of God to God’s people. (See Isaiah 62:1-5)
 1. *What is the significance of the use of symbolism in the gospels?*
 2. *In what way is this helpful? Or is it confusing?*

The final verse of this lesson indicates that this miracle was first of Jesus’ signs and “revealed his glory” (vs. 11). The Gospel of John has a series of seven signs – the number symbolic of completeness and wholeness. The “signs” or miracles of Jesus’ ministry all point to Jesus and his identity as God’s promised One. They serve to reveal the identity of Jesus to those who witness these events.

In this season of Epiphany, the Church of God looks for the ways God is revealed in the world. Just as the star of Bethlehem led the Wise Men to the Christ-child and the voice was heard at Jesus’ baptism proclaiming Jesus as God’s Son with whom God is well-pleased, so the signs in John’s Gospel point to Jesus. They are written and revealed in order to lead to faith. God’s glory is revealed in mystery. The story of the changing of water into wine at Cana concludes with the good news: “and his disciples believed in him” (vs. 11). Everything in the story – the empty jars, the miraculous transformation of water into wine, the hints of Jesus’ “hour”, the context of a wedding feast – all are included to elicit faith and to reveal Jesus as the promised Messiah.

3. *How do we experience God’s revelation today?*
4. *Which of the following phrases rings true: “seeing is believing” or “believing is seeing”?*
5. *How does a person come to faith? How did you come to believe in Jesus?*

word among us

The students and the teacher in the class were frustrated. The teacher had tried several different teaching methods to explain the important geometric formula but without success. The students did not understand the concept.

So the teacher had an idea. She asked the class to gather around her desk. "Watch closely," she said as she took three wooden blocks, formed them into a right-angled triangle, and measured each side. Then she took three other blocks of different lengths and did the same exercise, measuring the lengths of the sides of the second triangle. She moved over to the blackboard and wrote the formula once again, this time with the measurements of the two triangles.

It was as if a light had been turned on in the darkness of incomprehension. "Now I get it!" one of the students exclaimed. Experience led to comprehension. Seeing led to believing.

1. *Share other examples where seeing leads to understanding.*
2. *How is this true in our faith lives as well?*
3. *What does the expression "blind faith" mean?*

"I once was lost, but now I'm found; was blind, but now I see." These familiar words from the beloved hymn "Amazing Grace" capture the message of Epiphany. Epiphany is a time to look for God's presence. It is a time to lift up the experiences of God that lead to and deepen faith. It is a time for light to shine in the darkness of unbelief and incomprehension. It is a time of transformation.

4. *Where or when do you see and experience God's presence?*
5. *How might we look for God's presence during the coming week?*
6. *What does the hymn "Amazing Grace" mean to you?*

The story of the miraculous changing of water into wine at the wedding in Cana in Galilee is an "Epiphany story." And like most experiences of God's presence in our lives, there is an element of mystery in the experience. We don't know how Jesus turned water into wine. We don't know how a cross can be a sign of life, how dying can lead to rising, how Jesus can be truly God and truly human, how Christ can be truly present in a morsel of bread and a sip from a cup, or how a motley group of sinners can be the body of Christ.

We can't fully comprehend. But we see; and in seeing, we believe.

7. *What do you have trouble believing about Jesus Christ?*
8. *When has it all made sense to you?*
9. *What do you say to someone who has questions or doubts about their faith in Jesus Christ?*

Prayer of the Day

Lord God, source of every blessing, you showed forth your glory and led many to faith by the works of your Son, who brought gladness and salvation to his people. Transform us by the Spirit of his love, that we may find our life together in him, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen

Dig Deeper

Isaiah 62:1-5



Daily Discipleship

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last word

Look this week for signs of God's presence in your life.