

January 14, 2007

Isaiah 62:1-5

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

John 2:1-11

John 2:1-11

<sup>1</sup>On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. <sup>2</sup>Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. <sup>3</sup>When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." <sup>4</sup>And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come." <sup>5</sup>His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." <sup>6</sup>Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. <sup>7</sup>Jesus said to them, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. <sup>8</sup>He said to them, "Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward." So they took it. <sup>9</sup>When 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 <sup>10</sup>and 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." <sup>11</sup>Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

This is a good miracle. When we are asked to think of the miracles of Jesus, this is always one of the first to come to mind – changing water into wine. I'm not sure why this particular miracle gets more attention than most of the others - but I have an idea.

It might have something to do with the fact that Jesus does this by himself. It's just Jesus and six big jars of water and everybody else is a spectator...and that's kind of appealing.

Although his mother points out the depletion of wine, no one asks Jesus to perform a miracle, as the leper did. No one asks him to refrain from miracle-working, as the demons did. Jesus tells no one their faith has made them well, neither is he amazed at their unbelief. No one makes decisions, or gets healed, or has their lives confused. Ordinary people, people like you and me, don't get involved. It's just Jesus, and water, and all of a sudden we have a no-strings-attached miracle and the wedding party picks up and everybody's happy.

This is a good miracle.

I don't want to spoil things, but I will point something out. It's something that may temper our enthusiasm for this miracle. But it is a point that could put us in the way of many more miracles just like it.

I would like to point out the words of Jesus' mother, Mary. She said something to the servants about Jesus before he performed this miracle. "Do whatever he tells you."

For someone who can list *The Magnificat* among her credits, these words seem unremarkable. They are clear, but about as poetic as an exit ramp sign. But there is much to those words. It is quite a thing to say to servants. To tell servants to obey Jesus - without any reasons, or limits, or promises. "Do whatever he tells you." The servants obeyed Jesus. And if the servants had not obeyed Jesus there is nothing that tells us that we would be discussing changing water into wine this morning. This miracle rode into the kingdom of God on the shoulders of obedient servants.

"Do whatever he tells you."

Jesus' instructions were not impossible. They didn't stretch the capabilities of the servants. He told them to fill up six stone jars. That was a lot of work, but it was by no means out of the question. The point is - they did it. They did not say they couldn't see the use. They

did not tell Jesus it wouldn't work. They didn't try to improve Jesus' plan. They just did whatever Jesus told them.

A miracle happened that still gets our attention.

It's hard to define a miracle. When someone uses the word in casual conversation it usually means something spectacular. Never seen before. Unheard of. Unexplainable. Far beyond the experience of ordinary people.

It is no accident that the same definitions could be used for unquestioning obedience to God. Never seen before. Unheard of. Unexplainable. Far beyond the experience of ordinary people.

There is general agreement that God's miracles are not very common. In some sense, would agree with that notion. But God's miracles are as common as our total obedience to Him.

If miracles don't happen as often as we would like, I think the place to look for more is in our unquestioning obedience to what God calls us to do.

Water was changed into wine after Mary said, "Do whatever he tells you."

Jesus' instructions might have seemed pointless. It was a lot of work for no clear reason. But the servants did not concern themselves. They did what Jesus said.

Let's put ourselves in God's hands and see what happens. There is no shortage of instructions from God. It's just that we often dismiss his instructions. We don't like what we are told to do. It seems pointless, or too hard, or we're not used to it. We are afraid to turn over control - even to God.

God can do miracles...He just can't get anyone willing to fill up six water jars. He can't get anyone who will "Do whatever he tells you."

God is not slow with his instructions. He tells us what to do all the time - but do we listen? We get an idea...an inspiration if you will allow the word...but we turn it down. It doesn't make sense, and we put it out of our minds. We feel a hope for our life, or a desire for our community, something we would like to see for our church...but we put it out of our minds, because we know it won't work.

Yet we say we would love for Jesus to step in and work a miracle. Every time you have those instructions from Jesus, every time you have an inspiration, every time you have a hope, remember what Mary told us servants..."Do whatever he tells you."

Maybe we can't see the point. Maybe it looks like a lot of work. Maybe some of the other servants are talking about what's wrong with the idea and how wedding parties used to be a lot better in the old days. But let's make ourselves part of his idea and see what happens.

You are receiving instructions from God. He is telling you to show kindness. He reminds you to be forgiving. He tells you the importance of being positive, of listening to new ideas. You have constant opportunities to be generous and to study and listen to other people. There is no shortage of instructions from Jesus. They come to us all the time. They are as clear and straightforward as the instructions we read about this morning. "Fill up these six jars with water."

Jesus will take care of the results. He will work the miracles. Let's give him a chance.

We can be part of the miracles of God. He doesn't ask us to do things we cannot do. Anymore than he asked the servants to fill the jars with water. He does ask obedience.

Don't speculate on the outcome. Don't weigh the instructions to see if they make sense. Don't make a promise - and then decide it is too hard to keep.

We might want to keep that unholy separation between miracles and our lives. Miracles seem a lot clearer when Jesus does them on his own without a lot of interference from ordinary people.

Miracles are even better when they are part of our lives. Miracles that are a part of our lives come with obedience to God's instructions. Those miracles change our lives and make us part the kingdom of God in ways we cannot imagine.

This astonishing first miracle of Jesus that has thrilled millions of Christians over thousands of years - began with servants shrugging their shoulders and walking back and forth between the well and the water jars for no apparent reason - except that Jesus had told them to do it.

Jesus has more miracles to perform. Look around you at all the things that need to be done. You can see people who are worried and need a voice of reassurance. You can hear someone say, "There's no one to talk to." You can feel the frustration of all the things you wish you knew. You can hear children excited by what they have done and wanting to tell you about it. Those are such common situations. As common as water. Look what Jesus was able to do with water - when the servants in Cana were willing to bring it to him. Jesus speaks to you out of every common situation with the promise of a miracle.

What Jesus needs is not too hard for you to give. Your time, your patience, your life. Surely you haven't got anything better to do with your life than accomplish miracles in the kingdom of God.

Put your life in God's hands. "Do whatever he tells you."