

**- Saint John's Pulpit (Jan. 16, Second Sunday after the Epiphany)
- "Your Pain Will Turn into Joy" John 2:1-11**

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

They Have No Wine

The first week of 2022 began with snow. Too much! Because of this heavy snow, kids got one more extra winter break, and they finally began to go to school this past Monday. With the Omicron surge, parents and teachers worried about resuming classes, even if it was not planned, kids got one more week to stay at home out of the virus because of the snow. Parents were confused, but kids were so happy...

The heavy snow made us see another serious news on I-95. The decision to block I-95 made all be in a panic. At least for over 20 hours, people had to stay on the road without moving. So, I-95 became another parking lot with cold, hunger, and fatigue. Those who did not have a full gas tank in their vehicles had to turn off and on repeatedly to save gas. No food, no blanket, and no gas... This happened in the first week of 2022. Plus, how many people were without power at the same time?

I am not sure how many of you could see an article about a beautiful happening on I-95 at night. When all people were in big trouble with hunger, thirst, and cold, freight truck drivers who were delivering food opened their doors and shared food with people. Food was not good enough to cover everybody, but enough to make all feel love and care on that very cold night. I believe this story in papers tells us what to do in this difficult time. Although we are surrounded by many challenges, as long as we are willing to support, care, and share one another, we can get through all.

Jesus' solution for a matter of deficiency

The story this morning has several meanings in it. It was the first miracle (or sign) in the Gospel of John. It is one of the missions carried by Jesus in Epiphany. And the first miracle happened in one family, the most fundamental unit in the human world (and the only unit which had worked well during the pandemic).

As we noted, deficiency is never fun. Seriously this is like a name tag in our life. Indeed, we are more familiar with the word 'deficiency' than the word 'affluence' physically, emotionally, relationally, and financially. But there is one place we shouldn't see deficiency. It is a party place! Among many kinds of parties, a wedding party should be ready to serve all without deficiency. A friend of mine (actually her son) is a photographer. He has worked at many wedding parties with his camera, and he always loves to serve a wedding party by Indian people. Their wedding usually lasts a week and needs a photographers' help a lot. Not only taking pictures, but also enjoying food, dance, music, and colors!

When I recall my wedding, Hannah and I had to invest lots of time to see an estimated number of attendants. To get a ballpark number was a very important job as we are responsible for serving all guests with a plenty of food.

Going back to the story today, Jesus and his disciples were invited to a wedding party at Cana. Jesus' mother already was there and looked like playing an important role in that party. Some scholars guess it was a wedding party for Mary's relative although the story does not tell us about it.

However, what we really should focus is not on the party itself. Rather this story asks us to see carefully how Jesus resolved a big happening at the party. What happened then? No wine!

Still, not sure why the party had no wine. Were Jesus and his disciples non-RSVP guests? Or did they have a supply chain issue like us these days? This week, some people had experienced it when they went grocery shopping. Hard to find milk, bread, and meat! Because of bad weather, food items could not be delivered by trucks, so some people had trouble finding what they want. Anyhow, no wine at a wedding banquet is out of commonsense. But here is one more odd thing in the story. It was Jesus' reaction when he was told about this deficiency from his mother, Mary.

³ When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." ⁴ And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come." John 2:3-4 ESV

What does this have to do with me?

Knowing that Jesus is caring, supporting, and passionate to serve people, with this remark, *what does this have to do with me* from Jesus sounds very strange. Was he already drunken? He is not what we know of him. Never!

Let's take a moment to read this through again- What does this have to do with me? What about this paraphrasing? What does this have to do with God? Don't you think this is one of our daily expressions? Whenever we see troubles and challenges, we sometimes forget to trust God and pray. Even King Solomon, a symbol of wisdom presented why we need to think of God when we see troubles a long time ago. Let me read Ecclesiastes 7:13-14.

¹³ Consider the work of God; who can make straight what he has made crooked? ¹⁴ In the day of prosperity be joyful, and in the day of adversity consider; God has made the one as well as the other, so that mortals may not find out anything that will come after them. Ecclesiastes 7:13-14 NRSV

Simply speaking, those who have no faith do not trust God. On the other hand, for those who have knowledge lean on what they know. So, people easily speak this, what does this have to do with God? They try to avoid their duty of prayer, or they try to justify all by their power and knowledge.

Unfortunately, they do not know they are not with God. This is the worst deficiency – life without God!

A Lesson from Mary: Do Whatever He Tells You!

To Mary, Jesus' remark sounded embarrassing.

4 And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come." John 2:4 ESV

Although this was not what she expected to hear from Jesus, here is one important thing to learn from Mary. What did she do after hearing this?

5 His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." John 2:5 ESV

Faith journey does not guarantee your good days. It does not make you happy but makes you strong. Our strength in Faith is not only from success but also from failure. So, it leads us to feel affluence and deficiency. Through this process, we become strong and stronger in Christ. Because of Jesus, we experience triumph. But we also experience trial because of Him!

However, although our life is like riding on a rollercoaster, the only thing we should remember is this. Do whatever He tells you! By following Jesus Christ, we can overcome our challenges. Don't get me wrong. It does not mean that you live your life in abundant blessings material-wise. Rather, it means to live our life in abundant blessings spiritually. I believe that this is what people experienced one cold night on I-95 when they shared their little thing with one another.

As we know, this story ends with a miraculous transformation from water to wine. While people are excited to see the best quality wine, we Christians need to focus on how Jesus could change water to wine.

6 Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. John 2:6 NRSV

There were six stone water jars for purifying people... in other words, Jesus uses those who are willing to serve and support others. Through these people, the world is getting tasty and sweet. When Jesus showed a miracle of feeding five thousand people, a bag lunch from a little unnamed boy was used to feed all! This is the reason why we need to follow Jesus and serve others. After all, life is like the best wine in this story, which is always from loving God and neighbors.