

John 2:1-11 – Epiphany 2  
January 20, 2019

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

The first of Jesus' miracles or rather "signs" as John refers to them seems just a bit of a peculiar way to open Jesus' ministry. Why a wedding feast? Why water into wine? Why not a miraculous healing? Why not raising someone from the dead or even feeding the multitudes? And for those who think the Bible is void of humor this text seems to imply a bit of a whimsical twist to it. Mary, the mother of Jesus, notices that the wine has been exhausted at this wedding feast and goes to her son stating, "They have no wine." His response is someone cynical, "Who cares, what does that concern us?" Can't you just see this scene play out? The look on Mary's face when Jesus snaps back and the look on Jesus' face when she refuses to give in. Through her 30 years as his mother, her faith in God, her encounters with messengers of the Lord and her silent moments pondering what all this means, it seems the Holy Spirit has equipped her with the faith, confidence, and trust to know Jesus can and will act. She doesn't argue with him but rather goes directly to the servants at this banquet and tells them to "do whatever he tells you."

And Jesus acts. In fact, he acts with extraordinary results somewhere in the ballpark of 180 gallons of wine - the best wine around. In the grand scheme of things this miracle doesn't seem to amount to much. After all, it's just a wedding and they seem to be several days in. Yet, weddings were huge in ancient Israel. They were celebrations that united entire communities and this one is no different. They would last for 6 days and if the wine ran out then the bride and groom would be shamed. Wine carried with it important significance;

namely it was a symbol of a bountiful harvest, of God's abundance, of joy, gladness and hospitality. (David Lose, [workingpreacher.org](http://workingpreacher.org)) Thus, for the wine to run out would be catastrophic.

So, what about this "sign" of turning water into wine and providing an amount that could probably sustain dozens of weddings? The miracle itself is not the point of the story but rather the "sign" that reveals something about Jesus, who He is, and what God is doing through Him. This "sign" points to God's continual faithfulness of abundantly providing for God's people and creation. While initially it appeared there wasn't enough, God's actions in Jesus reveal yet again there is more than enough. Many Biblical scholars believe the intent and significance of "signs" in John's gospel are to reveal to the disciples, the people gathered in that time, and all who hear and read these narratives throughout the generations what abundant grace looks like, tastes like, and feels like. The signs give meaning to the words proclaimed in the Prologue of Chapter 1, specifically, verse 18:

From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made God known.  
(NRSV)

What does God's abundant grace look like? Stick around because John is about to show us in the revelation of seven signs Jesus performs.

The abundant grace of God is not a new theme in the history of God's providence for the whole of creation. It's a reoccurring theme throughout the Bible that unfortunately too often is dismissed as an afterthought by the people of God and replaced by a lack of trust in God's continual providence and promise to "give us our daily bread" and instead replaced by

fear, and systems that control and monopolize God's abundant creation and goodness. Sadly, this continues to happen to this day in that we fail to realize the abundance of God's blessings and instead give into a culture that proclaims "scarcity" and systems that cater to the further monopolization of the earth's resources. Theologian Walter Brueggemann states,

"The Bible is about abundance. From the first chapters of Genesis, God not only initiates abundance – calling forth plants and fish and birds and animals – but promises continued abundance by commanding them to 'increase and multiply' (1:22). God's generosity and fidelity reach their climax on the sixth day, when God proclaims a sufficiency for 'everything that has the breath of life' and declares all this 'very good' (1:30-31)." (From article "Sharing God's Abundance" by Janice Virtue at <http://www.faithandleadership.com/content/sharing-god%E2%80%99s-abundance>)

He goes on to point out scarcity doesn't show up in the Bible until Pharaoh's dream about a famine in the land toward the very end of Genesis. This is the first time someone says, "There is not enough. Let's get everything." And this was the turning point from thereon humanity has struggled to remember that there is enough; even though God has proven otherwise. Recall the Israelite people were enslaved under the oppressive hands of Egypt, yet they continued to multiply and multiply causing Pharaoh to issue an edict to kill all male babies. Yet, in spite of this, God's people continued to multiply. During their wilderness wandering after the Exodus the people complained against God there was no food and they were better off under the oppressive hand of Pharaoh. Yet, God once again provides in the form of manna. And there are many more examples along with examples of our "ongoing inability to believe in God's abundance, to believe that there is enough for all and to order our lives accordingly." (Virtue)

Perhaps, that is exactly is the "sign" we need to recall. God is a God of abundance. Abundant forgiveness. Abundant mercy. Abundant love. Abundant grace. We are driven by a

culture, an advertising machine that continues to prompt us to give into the belief we will never have enough. There is always something better on the horizon. Always something more. This text draws me back to contemplate the abundance of God and look for it in my life. In our congregation because it seems everywhere, we look there are signs in the form of advertisements telling us there is never enough. We will never be full. We will never be satisfied. We will never be happy. Lies that lead us to ever search and seek for more, even at the expense of another. Perhaps, this text is the “sign” we need yet today to help transform our oft mindset of scarcity, inadequacy, or whatever else it is we lack and simply trust in the promise we have a God of abundance who has bestowed upon us grace upon grace through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.