

Second Sunday After the Epiphany – 2022

Isaiah 62:1-5

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

John 2:1-11

Paul Harvey was an American treasure. I don't recall ever seeing his face, but I knew that voice. Paul Harvey was on the radio when the radio meant something, when the radio not only informed us but when it gave us a common experience, gave us a cultural gathering place, when the radio brought the world around us to our ears. Wolfman Jack, Casey Kasem, and Paul Harvey – they were the triumvirate who ruled the radio waves when I was a young lad. Paul Harvey was a reporter, a commentator and a story teller.

The Rest of the Story – that's what I remember. The Rest of the Story was a segment that Harvey did to weave a yarn about some famous person or another, creating keen interest in the listener by including dramatic details of trauma or heroism or some grand accomplishment and holding out who this person might be until the very end. Typically, the payoff at the conclusion of the story would be a total surprise – something you didn't know and didn't expect which made his audience drool with anticipation as he spoke with his very measured meter, leading his listeners carefully, expertly, to the final bit of the segment, the big reveal. And after the big reveal, Harvey would sign off with his signature line: "And that's the rest of the story."

The wedding at Cana is a big deal. Changing water into wine is a big deal. Changing a boatload of water into the very best wine ever to dampen the mouth of man is a big deal. But you need the rest of the story. You can't grasp the import of Cana apart from Jesus being in an Upper Room with His disciples on the night when He was betrayed. You can't inwardly digest the marvel of this miracle at Cana without transposing the Lord Christ bleeding on the cross over the top of it. You can't understand what was going on at Cana without understanding what is going on here. The wedding at Cana is the church's gathering place, an ongoing feast of salvation and hope and joy. The Holy Spirit has left us little bread crumbs to follow. You don't have to be a theological Sherlock Holmes to gain a renewed appreciation for this miracle. You just have to listen and look around.

The third day – now there's a clue. A two-x-four over the head is about as subtle as St. John beginning his account of this miracle by invoking the Third Day. The Third Day He Rose Again – it is a credal statement of a new creation. Death and resurrection are the invited guests to this wedding miracle. Remember, it is the blood of Christ that has washed His bride the church, to make her holy, to cleanse her of every spot, every stain, and every blemish (Ephesians 5). The blood of the crucified Bridegroom is what has washed you of the filthy rags of your selfishness, your pride and your lust. How prized you are! For what reason? Simply because He loves you. Jesus doesn't claim His bride because of her innate beauty or the bloom of her body. We are, in our sin, ugly and deformed and yet His banner over us is love. The miracle at Cana is set within that Third Day love. And they run out of wine.

It is a social faux pas that would make a sober Martha Stewart blush. Mary, the mother of our Lord, is in the know. She makes two appearances in the Gospel of John. Jesus calls her "woman" in both places. Do you know what the "rest of the story" is? Do you know where

Mary appears next in John's Gospel? At the foot of the cross. The Lord is dying. His hour had arrived and He was rendering up His life for the world. John and Mary – Jesus bound them to each other. “Woman, behold your son” (John 19:26). Then, to the disciple whom He loved, Jesus said: “Behold, your mother!” Cana and the cross – those are the only two places where we find Mary in John's Gospel. Do you think that that's an accident? What is God telling you?

They have no wine. Mary has one thing in mind; Jesus has another. That's obvious. “Woman, what does this have to do with me?” He has more in mind, would you agree? Jesus has more in mind than saving one embarrassing situation, more in mind than saving the face of one father of the bride, more in mind than the convivial spirit of thirsty guests. “My hour has not yet come.” Jesus replies to His mother as though she had asked Him to render up His blood right there on the spot. Whenever Jesus talks about His “hour” it is in reference to His death. Not now, mom. Jesus' timetable is on His Father's terms, not His mother's. But that death, that sacrifice, and the wine that you drink at this altar which is its fruit, those future realities come peeking in at Cana. Mary knows enough to put the servants of the feast at Jesus' feet. To them she said: “Do whatever he tells you” (John 2:5).

Six stone water jars; what do you know about the number six? Well, it's the number of incompleteness, one digit short of God's perfect creation – seven. Old Testament washing water would not endure. The Jewish rites of ritual purification were temporary. Who would fulfill them? The Son of God. How would He fulfill them? By death and resurrection. Fill the jars with water. Man, that's a lot of water. 120 gallons at least! Those servants, they did exactly as they were told. I want that kind of guy for my pastor. Hauschild, Zimmerman, Paulus, Siefkes, Fenton, Woodside, Rice, Wiley, Borntrager – those pastors are men who have journeyed with us in the Way. The servants Jesus spoke to did precisely as they were told. Pastors are men under authority. We are to do as He says, nothing less. Proclaim the Word in its truth and purity. Administer the Sacraments according to Christ's command. “And he said to them, ‘Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast.’ So they took it” (John 2:8). Brilliant! Give me that guy for my pastor.

What a moment! The bouquet, the flavor, the richness, it was light and complex and stimulating and altogether pleasing – the master of the banquet was entranced. “What?!” Who would hold this marvel out until the end of the feast? Who wouldn't let the light-weights enjoy *this* at the *beginning* of the bash? Man, this is good! Where did this come from? The bridegroom gets the first toast. The master of the feast compliments him, but the new wine of grace came from the Divine Guest, the one whose hour would bring life to those dead in trespasses and sins (you and me). Washing water had been replaced and transformed. New Wine had come.

It was an epiphany. Jesus revealed more than His power, more than His compassion. Our earthly wine runs dry. Life can be empty. Apart from God's grace, apart from forgiveness and hope of heaven, the wine of human emotion runs dry. Fear and loneliness have drunk so many souls dry in the last two years. You know why Christ came? To save you, to deliver you from sin and death. To give you life now! Only He could summon this kind of wine. Only He could pour out His life blood directly into our chalice. You drink the sweetness of His grace. God has saved the best for last: “In many and various ways God spoke to His people of old by the prophets. But now, in these last days, He has spoken to us by His Son” (Hebrews 1:1). Our

mouths long for the savor of heaven. Here it is; Christ's blood, poured out into your soul. The world's religion makes our mouths numb with emptiness, vanity. The wedding wine of heaven stimulates our soul with virtue – love for the least, serving any and all, blessing those who hate us, forgiving those who persecute us, praying for those who are forgotten by others, teaching children, comforting the grieving.

The rest of the story is that Christ is among us. We don't have the Scriptures *only* to see holy history – what God has done. We have the Scriptures to help us see what God is doing now. The rest of the story is this Divine Service. The Christ of Cana is the One who gives His blood in, with, and under a sweet Italian wine that we buy at BevMo! He is among us. He came not to be served but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many. His hour of suffering is His hour of triumph. His Easter envelops this room. You are the rest of the story. You are the wedding guest. You are the one He has always wanted to serve.