

January 19, 2025

Second Sunday After the Epiphany

“Manifest in You”

John 2:1-11

*“This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.”*

That’s what St. John writes, but in the eyes of the world Jesus does this first of His signs on the down-low. This might be why the weird response to His mother: *“Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come.”* Perhaps He is making clear that now is not the time for the full public Messianic work He will accomplish on the cross. And yet, compassionate and loving son that He is, He will rescue the situation nonetheless.

But who is aware of it? Who perceives this manifestation of His glory? Mary. Some of the servants. Christ’s disciples. There is this whole crowd there having a good time, and they benefit from this miracle, yet they are left oblivious to the presence of God in their midst. They don’t see the glory. Only a select few who have been called in one way or another perceive the glory of the first miracle of Christ.

This really seems to be the way Jesus works; or maybe more accurately stated: the way people react to Christ’s work.

Even when Jesus starts doing very public miracles of healing and exorcism most folks are impressed and amazed, but they don’t put their faith in Him as the Messiah sent by God to save His people from their sins. He’s more of a spectacle to most, an obstacle to be rejected by others. So when John writes that Jesus “manifested his glory” I have to ask where exactly is this manifestation, this appearing of His divine glory, happening? Despite the miracles it doesn’t seem to be a public thing, otherwise everybody would be dropping to their knees in worship.

No, I think that Jesus is indeed manifesting His glory in the miracles, but it is still on the down-low, truly being manifested only in the hearts of those who believe in Him—or maybe better said that only those with eyes of faith can perceive this divine glory. And I believe this is always the way Jesus works, at least until He returns in that divine glory and all will bow and confess that He is Lord.

Where is it that Jesus truly and publicly manifests His glory? It’s at the cross. Jesus Himself says the night before His crucifixion, *“Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him.”* And yet, while the cross is as public as can be, the glory manifested there is on the down-low, perceived by no one until after the resurrection. Yet even then, it is only perceived by those who receive the Gospel by faith through the power of the Holy Spirit. The risen Christ appears only to those who believe. To all others the empty tomb is a spectacle, an amazing story, inspiring at best, absolute foolishness at worst.

In light of this, when we ponder this story of the miracle at Cana it might be worth considering where we would be found according to our faith if we were one of the wedding guests.

There are lots of folks who know of Jesus, might even call themselves believers, but they are a lot like the guests out in the wedding hall. They’re willing to receive the good blessings of God with joy as the guests did the wine, but they don’t really perceive the glory of Christ that demands one accept Him as the true Lord of their life. These folks know Jesus is hanging about in this world and He most certainly is an impressive spectacle, but the actual picking up one’s cross and following Him part, not happening so much. Life is kind of like sitting at that wedding

table, enjoying the party on our own terms, even toasting the goodness of the bounty He provides, but not quite letting Him make any demands of you like the manifestation of divine glory, honor and authority does.

But when His glory is manifested in our hearts—meaning the glory of the cross and what He accomplishes there for us—this makes demands on us. He is our glorious Lord, who has purchased us body and soul into His eternal kingdom at the cost of His blood. He is not just an impressive, awe-inspiring spectacle. We belong to Him. Our desire is to conform our lives, our thoughts and desires, our very will and being, to Him and Him alone as our greatest good who loves us as no other.

There is a stark difference at Cana. You've got the master of the earthly feast and all the guests saying, "Wow. Great wine! Let's party!" and then you've got those who have been called looking at Jesus, perceiving His manifested glory, and believing in Him. They don't really care about the wine!

You've been called. You know the true glory of Christ's cross. Christ, on the down-low in your Holy Baptism, has placed you in Himself there and through the tomb in His own resurrection. His glory is manifested and fed to you in, with and under the humble bread and wine. His glory is yours to perceive, receive and ultimately to fully dwell within for all eternity.

Satan, the world and your own fallen nature constantly tempt us to be more focused on the creation rather than the Creator. For us that's like being at Cana and knowing we stand in the presence of the glorious Son of God who saves us and someone's saying, "But dude, come out here to the party. You really have to check this wine!" We don't. Christ is our Lord! We follow Him!

Yet I bet every single person here, with very little effort can recall a time in the past few days where you blatantly went for the wine, right? We chase the world real quick and before we know it we catch ourselves glorying in the world, the party, our own life, having stepped aside from the new life we've received in Christ.

Take comfort in another truth from the Gospel lesson today. In manifesting His glory at Cana Jesus produces a ridiculously abundant amount of wine. By today's measure, Jesus produced enough to pour more than 9000 glasses of wine. Even if this was a larger wedding that went on for days this is more than enough!

The manifestation of Christ's glory on the cross produced an endlessly abundant forgiveness which covers all of the world's sins. He does this that He would forgive all of those times you step aside toward worldly glory and sin. This grace does not run out. To this very day this forgiveness is poured out, ironically still involving wine in the Holy Supper in which we receive Christ's holy and precious blood.

So don't be distracted by the party that is worldly glory. Stay focused on the true and eternal glory of Christ. If you stumble, return to the true and eternal glory of Christ. You've been called and you know where the glory of God has been manifested for you—in Christ; in His Gospel good news. Always keep looking for and finding that glory...and believe in Him.

Amen.