

2ND SUNDAY (C) JOHN 2: 1 - 12

TODAY'S GOSPEL READING COMES FROM JOHN AND THE THEME OF HIS GOSPEL IS THAT JESUS IS THE SOURCE OF LIFE. IN CHAPTER 10 HE SAYS, "I HAVE COME THAT YOU MAY HAVE LIFE, AND HAVE IT ABUNDANTLY." TO BE A CHRISTIAN IS TO EXPERIENCE A NEW LIFE, A NEW SENSE OF HAPPINESS, A NEW PEACE, A NEW RELATIONSHIP WITH THOSE YOU MEET ALONG THE WAY.

DURING THE CHRISTMAS SEASON AND UP TO NOW, WE HAVE BEEN SEEING GOD REVEAL HIMSELF THROUGH JESUS IN SEVERAL WAYS. FIRST, WHEN JESUS WAS BORN IT WAS AS A REFUGEE AND A HOMELESS, POOR PERSON LYING IN A STABLE. GOD REVEALS HIMSELF IN SOLIDARITY WITH THE POOR AND NEEDY OF THE WORLD. THE FIRST PEOPLE TO VISIT HIM ARE THE POOR, THE SOCIAL OUTCASTS, THE SHEPHERDS. THEY RECOGNIZE THEIR GOD AND WORSHIP HIM WITH HEARTS FULL OF JOY.

SECOND, GOD REVEALS HIMSELF TO THE FOREIGNERS, STRANGERS BELIEVERS IN OTHER RELIGIONS COMING FROM REMOTE PARTS OF THE WORLD. THIS HAPPENS ON THE FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY WHEN WE REMEMBER THOSE 'WISE MEN' WHO CAME FROM A FAR COUNTRY TO WORSHIP AND OFFER PRECIOUS GIFTS. AGAIN, THE ATMOSPHERE IS FILLED WITH JOY AND GLADNESS.

THIRD, GOD REVEALS HIMSELF WHEN JESUS IS BAPTIZED IN THE RIVER JORDAN AND IS FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT OF GOD. OF THIS YOUNG CARPENTER, AT THIS STAGE AN UNKNOWN IN THE CROWD, A VOICE FROM ABOVE SAYS, "THIS IS MY BELOVED SON – LISTEN TO HIM." TO LISTEN TO THIS YOUNG MAN, JESUS, IS TO LISTEN TO GOD HIMSELF.

AND NOW, TODAY, FOR A FOURTH TIME, IN JOHN'S GOSPEL, GOD REVEALS HIMSELF WHEN JESUS PERFORMS HIS FIRST SIGN. (JOHN DOES NOT CALL THEM 'MIRACLES' BUT 'SIGNS', SIGNS OF GOD ACTING AMONG HIS PEOPLE. THERE WILL BE SEVEN SUCH 'SIGNS' ALTOGETHER IN HIS GOSPEL.)

TO UNDERSTAND TODAY'S STORY, WE NEED TO BE AWARE THAT JOHN'S WRITING IS FULL OF SYMBOLIC LANGUAGE. WE WOULD MISS THE POINT IF WE WERE ONLY TO SEE HERE A MIRACLE BY JESUS WHICH HELPS A YOUNG BRIDEGROOM WHO FINDS HIMSELF EMBARRASSED ON HIS WEDDING DAY.

IN THE FIRST PART OF JOHN'S GOSPEL AFTER THE INTRODUCTION, THE EVENTS DESCRIBED TAKE PLACE OVER A PERIOD OF SEVEN DAYS, ONE WEEK. TODAY'S STORY TAKES PLACE ON THE SEVENTH DAY OF THAT WEEK. SO AS GOD RESTED ON THE SEVENTH DAY WHEN THE WORK OF CREATION WAS COMPLETE, IN THE GOSPEL THE SEVENTH DAY IS ONE OF JOY AND CELEBRATION FOR THE LIFE WE HAVE RECEIVED AT OUR BAPTISM.

AND SO, WE COME TO THE SIGN, THE HEART OF TODAY'S STORY. JOHN SAYS THERE WERE SIX LARGE STONE POTS FULL OF WATER. THEY WERE THERE FOR THE JEWISH CEREMONIES OF PURIFICATION WHICH WERE REQUIRED BY TRADITION ON COMING INTO THE HOST'S HOUSE AND BEFORE ENJOYING THE MEAL. IN THIS STORY, THEY REPRESENT, FOR US THE LAWS AND RELIGIOUS CUSTOMS OF THE HEBREW PEOPLE. THROUGH THE INTERVENTION OF JESUS, THE WATER IN THESE JARS IS TRANSFORMED INTO WINE AND A FIRST-CLASS WINE AT THAT. A SIMILAR IMAGE IS PRESENTED IN THE OTHER GOSPELS WHEN JESUS SPEAKS OF THE NEW WINE WHICH NEEDS NEW WINESKINS. IN OTHER WORDS, THE NEW VISION OF LIFE THAT HE BRINGS CAN ONLY BE UNDERSTOOD BY LEAVING BEHIND TRADITIONAL WAYS OF THINKING. AND, IN THE STORY, THERE IS A LOT OF WINE CREATED. EACH JAR COULD HOLD UP TO 20 GALLONS – 120 GALLONS OF WINE FOR A VILLAGE WEDDING.

AGAIN, A SYMBOL FOR US, A SYMBOL OF THE GENEROSITY OF GOD AND THE FULLNESS OF LIFE HE WANTS US TO EXPERIENCE. WE MIGHT BE REMINDED OF THE FEEDING OF VAST NUMBERS WHEN SO MUCH FOOD WAS LEFT OVER.

ALL THIS IS TAKING PLACE AT A WEDDING BANQUET. IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

BOOK OF ISAIAH, ISRAEL IS PICTURED AS THE BRIDE OF GOD. IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, THE CHURCH, THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY, IS THE BRIDE OF JESUS. WHEN WE WISH TO CELEBRATE – A WEDDING, A BIRTHDAY, AN ANNIVERSARY – WE NATURALLY SIT DOWN TOGETHER AND EAT. IN SCRIPTURE, TOO, LIFE WITH GOD, LIFE WITH JESUS IS PICTURED AS A BANQUET. IT IS A TIME TO ENJOY LIFE AND BE HAPPY TOGETHER.

AND SO ULTIMATELY THIS WEDDING TODAY REMINDS US OF THE MEAL WE CELEBRATE EVERY SUNDAY, THE EUCHARIST, WHEN WE GATHER AS A COMMUNITY TO EAT AND DRINK AROUND THE TABLE OF THE LORD. AND WHAT IS THERE TO CELEBRATE? AT ITS DEEPEST LEVEL OF MEANING, WE CELEBRATE ALL THAT GOD HAS DONE FOR US IN JESUS CHRIST THROUGH HIS LIFE, HIS TEACHING, HIS SUFFERING, DEATH AND RESURRECTION – ALL SIGNS OF GOD’S OVERWHELMING LOVE FOR US.

IN THE SECOND READING, PAUL REMINDS US OF SOMETHING MORE THAT GOD HAS GIVEN US TO CELEBRATE, THE TREASURY OF GIFTS THAT HAVE BEEN GIVEN TO EACH ONE OF US. THESE GIFTS ARE NOT MERELY FOR US TO USE FOR OURSELVES. THEY ARE THE MEANS, THE TALENTS WE HAVE BEEN GIVEN TO SHARE TO MAKE OUR UNIQUE AND PERSONAL CONTRIBUTION TO OUR CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY AND TO THE OVERALL TASK OF BUILDING A SOCIETY BASED ON LOVE, JUSTICE, FREEDOM AND PEACE.

AND WE HAVE MUCH TO CELEBRATE AND BE THANKFUL FOR BECAUSE SO MANY AMONG US HAVE USED THEIR GIFTS TO PROMOTE THE WELL-BEING OF EACH OF US AS PARISHIONERS HERE.

FINALLY, MARY IS THERE AT THE FEAST. IT WAS THROUGH HER SENSITIVE AWARENESS THAT JESUS CAME TO KNOW ABOUT THE BRIDEGROOM’S EMBARRASSMENT. IN THIS STORY, SHE IS NOT ONLY THE MOTHER OF JESUS; SHE REPRESENTS THE CHURCH. IT IS THROUGH OUR CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY THAT JESUS

COMES TO US. IT IS THROUGH THE CHURCH, THROUGH OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN THIS COMMUNITY, THAT WE LEARN ABOUT THE LIFE THAT GOD, IN AND THROUGH JESUS, WANTS US TO ENJOY AND SHARE. THROUGH THE CHURCH, THE COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS, WE RECEIVE THE HELP WE NEED TO LIVE A FULL LIFE.

THAT IS THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH AND THE FULL MEANING OF THE TERM STEWARDSHIP... WE ALL GIVE AND WE ALL RECEIVE.

TODAY, WHAT WILL I GIVE TO HELP OTHER TOWARDS ENJOYING A FULLER AND HAPPIER LIFE.