

“Thinking of yourself less...” John 2:1-11

On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples. When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.” And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come.” His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.” Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to the servants, “Fill the jars with water.” And they filled them up to the brim. And he said to them, “Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast.” So they took it. When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom and said to him, “Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now.” This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.

Have you ever heard people complaining that there was nothing interesting for me in that sermon. Almost nothing about me, or my life, or what I like, it was again mostly about the Bible and about this Jesus.

Pastors hear comments like this from time to time. It is nothing surprising. In a way it is inevitable. Why? Because of what we are. Sinners. And one of the symptoms of our sinfulness in our self-focus. Our preoccupation with self.

Not with our neighbours, whom we are to love, not with our God, whom we are to love more than anything, but with us. When someone has no interest to hear more about Jesus, but wants to hear more about themselves, it is our sinful self that demands that the whole world revolve around me.

Famous Christian writer C.S. Lewis once said something very fitting. He said it about humility, but we could apply it to being a Christian. This is what he said. To be a Christian is not thinking less of yourself, it is thinking of yourself less.

This is our struggle. This is why we need to focus our thinking away from precious me and to turn it to the One, who truly deserves all our attention. To our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Today for our meditation we have this event from the very beginning of Jesus ministry, where He and His disciples were at a wedding in Cana Galilee and where Jesus did, what John called His first sign.

Let's look at this event so that we can see why it is recorded in the Bible and why we need to hear about Jesus every day, even if we often are much more interested in ourselves than in Him.

On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples.

What third day, we may ask? At the end of chapter one John describes how Jesus' called His first disciples. As John continues His gospel account we can see that probably it was the third day since Jesus encounter with Nathanael.

Nathanael, by the way, was from Cana. Now there was a wedding in Cana in Galilee. Cana was some 15 km north from Nazareth, today there are ruins known as Khirbet Qana.

Jesus' mother was there as well. We can see that probably she had some responsibilities related to the catering, this is why she was concerned about the shortage of wine.

Jesus and His disciples also where invited to the wedding. Which disciples, we may ask? Probably the same which were already introduced in the previous chapter: Andrew and John, Simon Peter, Phillip and Nathanael.

As we know John and his brother James actually where Jesus' relatives. Peter and Andrew were business partners with John and James. It is no wonder that they all happen to be invited to the same wedding.

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

This may appear to be somewhat confusing at a first sight. What was going on? Jesus mother Mary had her responsibilities, and she realized that they had run out of wine.

Weddings used to last up to week, and bridegroom was responsible for food and drinks. Wine was understood to be a symbol of joy and celebration. That would be very embarrassing for him if they had run out of wine.

So, why did Mary asked Jesus? Some have suggested that Jesus and His disciples were to blame for the fact that they had run out of wine. Six young men, celebrating for quite a few days, it could be one of explanations.

But probably there is a much simpler explanation. By that time Mary's husband Joseph would have passed away. Last time He was mentioned after their journey to Jerusalem when Jesus was still twelve. Then Jesus would be responsible to take care of His mom.

And she would naturally rely on Him in difficult situations, knowing that He will come up with some kind of solution. The same could be true in this case. Where could she go? "Jesus, they have no wine, do something about it. Help me!"

Was she expecting a miracle? Probably not. She was just looking for a help. Jesus' answer seems puzzling. "Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come."

What Jesus said is difficult to translate. It wasn't simply 'woman', like cold and disrespectful address. It was more like 'woman dear'. It was a common and respectful address, but it was still unusual in this situation.

Why did Jesus speak this way? Why did Jesus asked this question "what does this have to do with me?" We need to remember, that this was a very beginning of Jesus' public ministry. So far He had lived in His vocations, supporting His mother as her son, and serving His neighbors in Nazareth as a carpenter.

Now the time had come for Jesus to take on the mission for which He was sent, and for which He had received the Holy Spirit. From this moment on, He will be led only by the will of the Father, doing what the Father had sent Him to do. All others ties and responsibilities will have to give place to the main one.

Thus we can see it here, and we can see it throughout the gospels, that Jesus refuses to obey to, or be guided by someone else, except His Father in Heaven. From this moment on all people are equal before Him.

There are no more close relatives who could use their status to direct Jesus. That's the explanation of Jesus somewhat strange reply. However, His mother didn't have anyone else to rely on.

Even if she couldn't approach Jesus as her son anymore, she still trusted that He is the one who will help her. Her plea is similar to the one of Samaritan woman. Even if initially Jesus refuses to help, at the end He does it.

The same way this time. Mary said trusting in Jesus: **"Do whatever he tells you."** Sure she didn't know what Jesus was going to do, and Jesus did something that no one could possible expect Him to.

As there were stone water jars, Jesus said to the servants to fill the jars with water, to draw some out and to take it to the master of the feast. So they did. And when he had tasted the water now become wine, he reproached the bridegroom for keeping the good wine for so late.

As John summarizes this event, **"this, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him."** What more can we say? Obviously that was a very good wine. And obviously there was abundance of it, for each of these water jars contained 85 to 125 liters.

Symbolically we could say that where Jesus is, there is abundance of joy and celebration, with Him there is this true wedding feast where He Himself is bridegroom and the Church, His chosen people are His bride.

And this is exactly the picture of the age to come, our ultimate hope, the heavenly feast with Our Lord and our host. With abundance of everything, with joy and celebration, with seeing our God and Savior face to face.

Now let's reflect a little bit on how John called this event. A sign. Not a miracle, not a wonder, but a sign. What does this word 'sign' mean? It means that the event itself is not the main thing, it simply points to something beyond it.

If this event in Cana was a sign, what was it pointing to? John gives us the answer at the end of his gospel account. "Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." (John 20:30-31)

This was and is the point. This is why we read the Bible and meditate about it. So that you may know that this Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.

You see, what is recorded in the Bible, these are true events, historical events, witnessed by many eyewitnesses. However, these events are only signs that point to something greater. They point to a higher reality.

They give you a glimpse of who Jesus truly was. Even if these signs were witnessed by so many, Jesus true identity can't be grasped by our senses and our reason. Thousands witnessed signs done by Jesus, and how many followed Him?

Thousands greeted Jesus as He entered Jerusalem, and how many a few days later howled "Crucify Him, crucify Him." We can learn about what Jesus did, about His power over nature, people, demons, life and death, but that doesn't allow us to comprehend who Jesus was. We need the help of the Holy Spirit to grasp the reality beyond the signs.

This is how we can describe Christian faith. It is based on real, historical events, attested by many eyewitnesses. All of this is true. And you can show someone that they all are true. But it won't necessarily help them to trust that Jesus Christ was true God, the God, who came to save us from sin and eternal death by giving up His life. The Holy Spirit is needed.

You can demonstrate as historically accurate the fact that Jesus was together with His disciples on the last night, and that He instituted the Lord's Supper. You can

demonstrate that His disciples begun to celebrate the Lord's Supper right after Jesus ascension.

You can demonstrate that Jesus promised that in the bread and wine of His Supper, He Himself will be present, to bless us, and that this is why the Church has celebrated the Holy Communion from the very beginning.

But this will not create the true faith that Jesus Christ, the Lord on Lords and the King of Kings in Himself present in His Holy Meal. This faith is the gift and the work of the Holy Spirit, Who helps us to grasp the reality beyond the signs.

People thought that turning water into wine was a miracle. Well. We all are witnesses to much greater miracle. For every times when we come into the Lord's presence He turns wine and bread into His real presence.

It is still wine and bread, but it is also our Lord Jesus Christ truly present in these elements of creation, to share with you His holiness, to forgive you all your sins and to assure that His forgiveness applies to you. As you eat and drink the Lord's Supper, you receive all of these wonderful gifts.

As Jesus Christ feeds you with His holy and life-giving body and His holy and life-giving blood, you already begin to partake in the heavenly feast with all the angels, and archangels and the saints, in the feast which will continue forever.

You see, we are not here to talk about ourselves, or to focus on ourselves. We do it all the time anyway. The Triune God has invited you here, so that He could bless you in so many ways, so that the Holy Spirit could open your eyes, and so that you could rejoice knowing that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that you have receive eternal life in His name.

This is why we are here. This is what we need to be reminded all the time. This is what you will be assured in the Lord's Supper. Don't think less of yourself, you are precious in God's eyes, Jesus gave up His life for you, but think of yourself less, instead think about your Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and the future He has prepared for you.

Amen.