

**John 2:1-11**  
**January 20, '19**

**“WHATEVER”**

**GENERATIONS COME & GO AND YET WITHIN  
EVERY GENERATION SINCE THE BEGINNING OF TIME,  
ITS TEENAGERS HAVE FOUND A WAY OF MAKING  
THEIR PARENTS FURIOUS.**

**OUR GRANDPARENTS DID IT TO OUR GREAT  
GRANDPARENTS AS DID OUR PARENTS TO OUR  
GRANDPARENTS AND AS WE DID TO OUR OWN  
PARENTS.**

**OUR CHILDREN DID IT TO US & I MUST TELL YOU  
THAT, AS A GRANDPARENT – AND I KNOW SOME OF  
YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT I’M SAYING AND THE SPIRIT  
IN WHICH IT’S SAID - THERE ARE FEW GREATER  
SARDONIC JOYS IN LIFE THAN SEEING YOUR**

**GRANDCHILDREN DO THE SAME TO THEIR OWN  
PARENTS!**

**I THINK THAT’S WHAT WE CALL “POETIC  
JUSTICE,” ISN’T IT?**

**EACH GENERATION HAS TO FIND ITS OWN WAY  
OF INFURIATING THEIR PARENTS & SOMEHOW THE  
MISSION NEVER FAILS TO BE ACCOMPLISHED.**

**I’M NOT SURE WHEN THE SINGLE WORD  
APPROACH WITH THE ACCOMPANYING EYE ROLL  
BEGAN & I’M NOT EVEN SURE IF IT’S NOW COME TO  
AN END, BUT THERE WAS A TIME WHEN A DISMISSIVE  
“*WHATEVER*” FROM THE LIPS OF A TEENAGER COULD  
SEND A PARENT INTO A DEADLY RAGE.**

**THE VERY WORD IS SO PERFECT & IT WAS SHEER  
GENIUS THAT INSPIRED THE FIRST TEENAGER TO**

**DISCOVER ITS AWESOME POWER OVER HIS OR HER PARENTS!**

**THE WORD – IN THE WAY IT’S USED - MEANS ABSOLUTELY NOTHING – BUT CONVEYS ABSOLUTELY EVERYTHING!**

**HANG ONTO THAT THOUGHT – AND PRIMARILY THAT WORD - BECAUSE I WANT TO COME BACK TO IT.**

**IN CASE YOU HAVEN’T NOTICED, WE’VE BEEN ON A JOURNEY SINCE THE BEGINNING OF ADVENT.**

**WE LOOKED AT OLD TESTAMENT PASSAGES THAT FORETOLD THE BIRTH OF THE MESSIAH.**

**WE CONSIDERED THE EVENTS LEADING UP TO THE BIRTH OF JESUS & THEN THE BIRTH ITSELF.**

**WE THEN LOOKED AHEAD A FEW MONTHS – OR PERHAPS EVEN A FEW YEARS – TO THE VISIT OF THE WISE MEN.**

**OUR JOURNEY THEN WENT ON FAST-FORWARD,  
JUMPING THREE DECADES INTO THE BAPTISM OF  
JESUS WHICH THRUST HIM INTO HIS MINISTRY.**

**AND NOW, HERE WE ARE WITH OUR LECTIONARY  
GOSPEL READING THIS MORNING FROM JOHN'S  
GOSPEL, LOOKING AT THE VERY FIRST MIRACLE HE  
PERFORMED.**

**I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU, BUT THIS SEEMS ODD  
TO ME.**

**WHY IS THIS HIS FIRST MIRACLE?**

**WHY CHOOSE WATER INTO WINE AS THE  
MIRACLE THAT WILL SET THE STAGE FOR THE REST  
OF HIS MINISTRY & ALL THE OTHER MIRACLES  
WHICH WILL FOLLOW?**

**WHY NOT SOMETHING A BIT BOLDER OR A BIT  
MORE – DARE WE SAY – MEANINGFUL?**

**WHY WOULDN'T THE FIRST MIRACLE OF JESUS BE SOMETHING LIKE A MASSIVE HEALING OR THE FEEDING OF THE MULTITUDES – SOMETHING THAT TUGS AT OUR HEARTSTRINGS OR SHOWS US THE COMPASSION & CARE OF JESUS?**

**AND ASIDE FROM THAT, WHY START THE STORY OF HIS ENTIRE MINISTRY AT A WEDDING FEAST?!**

**IT WAS IMMEDIATELY PRIOR TO THIS EVENT THAT JOHN TOLD US ABOUT THE CALLING OF THE DISCIPLES.**

**JOHN BEGAN HIS GOSPEL WITH THAT OVERPOWERING, SYMBOLIC PROCLAMATION THAT *“IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD AND THE WORD WAS WITH GOD AND THE WORD WAS GOD.”***

**HE THEN TOLD US JESUS WAS BAPTIZED & THAT  
LED TO THE CALLING OF THE DISCIPLES – ALL OF  
THIS IN HIS VERY FIRST CHAPTER.**

**HE’S BROUGHT US TO THE EDGE OF OUR SEATS,  
READY FOR THE STORY TO BEGIN – READY FOR THE  
EXPLOSION OF HIS MINISTRY TO THE WORLD!**

**AND WHAT HAPPENS INSTEAD?**

**JESUS & HIS DISCIPLES – RATHER THAN HEADING  
OUT TO CHANGE THE WORLD – WIND UP AT A  
WEDDING BANQUET!**

**WHY?**

**WHAT’S THE POINT?**

**WELL, WITH JOHN, *EVERYTHING* HAS A POINT.**

**IN FACT, IN JOHN, THE MIRACLES ARE NEVER  
REFERRED TO AS “MIRACLES.”**

**HE CALLS THEM “SIGNS” AND THAT, IN ITSELF, IS SYMBOLIC.**

**THE MIRACLES ARE FAR MORE THAN MIRACLES – FAR MORE THAN SOMEONE DOING THINGS THAT NO ONE HAS EVER DONE BEFORE.**

**THE MIRACLES ARE, MORE IMPORTANTLY, SIGNS THAT POINT TO SOMETHING ELSE.**

**SO IT IS IT WITH THIS ONE.**

**I THINK ONE THING JOHN WANTS TO POINT US TOWARD – ONE THING HE WANTS US TO LEARN FROM THE VERY OUTSET IS THAT JESUS HAS COME TO EXPERIENCE JOY WITH US & TO ENSURE THAT OUR LIVES ARE FILLED WITH THE JOY THAT HE & HE ALONE CAN BRING.**

**HE'S WITH US IN ALL OF THE MILESTONES OF OUR  
LIFE – BIRTHS & BAPTISMS - BIRTHDAYS &  
GRADUATIONS - FAMILY REUNIONS & FUNERALS.**

**HE'S WITH US THIS MORNING AT THE GLORIOUS  
MOMENT OF OUR ORDINATION & INSTALLATION  
SERVICE AND HE WAS WITH US LAST SUNDAY AT THE  
CLOSING CELEBRATION OF THE NEWBURGH  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.**

**THIS FIRST MIRACLE OF JESUS IS A SIGN TO  
REMINDE US THAT IN ALL OF OUR MOMENTS & ALL OF  
OUR MILESTONES, JESUS IS THERE.**

**HE'S THERE TO DEEPEN OUR JOY IN THE HIGH  
TIMES & HE'S THERE TO LESSEN OUR SORROW IN THE  
LOW ONES.**

**SOMETHING ELSE I THINK JOHN WANTS US TO  
LEARN FROM THIS STORY TAKES US BACK TO THAT**



**WORD WITH WHICH WE BEGAN – THE WORD  
“WHATEVER” – USED, OF COURSE, IN A MUCH  
DIFFERENT FASHION THAN THE MANNER IN WHICH  
TEENAGERS USE IT!**

**YOU MAY HAVE NOTICED THAT WORD’S  
APPEARANCE IN THIS PASSAGE.**

**IT’S SPOKEN BY MARY – THE MOTHER OF JESUS.**

**INTERESTINGLY, MARY APPEARS ONLY TWICE IN  
JOHN’S GOSPEL & ON BOTH OCCASIONS, SHE’S NOT  
REFERRED TO BY HER NAME BUT SIMPLY AS “*THE  
MOTHER OF JESUS.*”**

**WE FIND HER HERE AT THE WEDDING AT CANA &  
LATER AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS.**

**THE MOTHER OF JESUS WAS THERE FOR HIS  
FIRST MIRACLE & HIS LAST BREATH.**

**HERE, AT THIS WEDDING FESTIVAL, WHEN THE WINE RAN OUT, IT WAS MARY WHO SAID TO THE SERVANTS, “DO WHATEVER HE TELLS YOU.”**

**THAT SINGLE STATEMENT IS PACKED WITH SIGNIFICANCE, ISN'T IT – ESPECIALLY AS WE CONSIDER EVERYTHING WHICH FOLLOWS IT!**

**UNDER OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES, THAT STATEMENT MAY HAVE TAKEN ME A DOZEN DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS.**

**BUT TODAY, IT TAKES ME SOMEWHERE I HADN'T PLANNED ON GOING & I WANT TO ASSURE YOU THAT YOU WON'T BE HEARING ABOUT THIS EVERY SUNDAY FOR THE NEXT SIX WEEKS OR SO.**

**TODAY, THOUGH, THIS STATEMENT – THIS DECLARATION – THIS DIRECTIVE FROM THE MOTHER OF JESUS AND THEN EVERYTHING THAT IS BROUGHT**

**ABOUT AS A RESULT OF THAT DIRECTIVE, TAKES ME  
TO WHAT HAS HAPPENED HERE RECENTLY.**

**I SIMPLY CAN'T AVOID SEEING THE MESSAGE &  
THE CONNECTION BETWEEN "*DO WHATEVER HE  
TELLS YOU*" AND THE MERGER OF THE NEWBURGH  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH & THE EASTMINSTER  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.**

**OH, I KNOW.**

**IT'S NOT A MERGER.**

**WE'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO TALK ABOUT THE "M"  
WORD IN CONNECTION WITH THESE TWO  
CONGREGATIONS.**

**WE DIDN'T "OFFICIALLY" MERGE.**

**BUT LET'S FACE IT – THAT'S WHAT IT IS.**

**I DON'T CARE ABOUT BY-LAWS & BOARD  
COMPOSITION.**

**I DON'T CARE ABOUT PROPERTY & ASSETS.**

**AS JIM GULICK SAID LAST WEEK, ALL OF THOSE THINGS AREN'T NEARLY IMPORTANT AS SOME OTHER THINGS.**

**WHAT'S IMPORTANT IS PEOPLE & PROGRAMS.**

**AND, TO ME, WHEN THE VAST MAJORITY OF THE REGULAR ATTENDERS OF ONE CONGREGATION AND THE VAST MAJORITY OF THE REGULAR ATTENDERS OF ANOTHER CONGREGATION COME TOGETHER AS ONE - WHEN THE PROGRAMS OF ONE CHURCH JOIN TOGETHER WITH THE PROGRAMS OF ANOTHER CHURCH – THAT, TO ME, IS A MERGER, REGARDLESS OF WHAT THE LEGALISTS HAVE TO SAY!**

***“DO WHATEVER HE TELLS YOU”* AND THAT'S WHAT CHRIST HAS TOLD US TO DO.**

**LOOK AT WHAT HAPPENED IN CANA.**

**DID IT MAKE ANY SENSE AT ALL FOR THOSE  
SERVANTS TO LISTEN TO MARY & THEN DO WHAT  
JESUS TOLD THEM TO DO?**

**OF COURSE NOT – NOT IF YOU’RE THINKING IN  
THE WORLD’S TERMS.**

**YOU DON’T FILL SIX 30-GALLON JUGS WITH  
WATER UP TO THE BRIM & SUDDENLY DISCOVER IT’S  
ALL TURNED INTO 180 GALLONS OF WINE!**

**THAT’S NOT HOW THE WORLD WORKS.**

**BUT JESUS DID SOMETHING MIRACULOUS IN  
THEIR MIDST THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING!**

**THINK OF THE ANXIETY, THE HOPELESSNESS, THE  
DESPAIR THAT WAS BEING EXPERIENCED BY THE  
HOSTS AT THAT WEDDING FEAST.**

**ONE OF THEM SAYS, “*LOOK AROUND. PEOPLE ARE  
ABOUT TO LEAVE & PRETTY SOON, THERE’LL BE NO***

***ONE LEFT ANYMORE.”***

***AND JESUS SAYS, “OH, REALLY? TRY A TASTE OF THIS.”***

***SOMEONE ELSE SAYS, “THIS IS A CRISIS! TRADITION SAYS THAT WHEN YOU RUN OUT OF WINE, IT’S A BAD OMEN FOR THE FUTURE OF THE MARRIAGE?”***

***AND JESUS SAYS, “OH, REALLY? TRY A TASTE OF THIS.”***

***CAN YOU SEE HOW I CAN’T HELP BUT READ THIS PASSAGE AND FIND A CLEAR CONNECTION WITH WHAT’S GOING ON HERE BETWEEN TWO CHURCHES?***

***ONE OF THEM SAYS, “LOOK AROUND. PEOPLE ARE ABOUT TO LEAVE & PRETTY SOON, THERE’LL BE NO ONE LEFT ANYMORE.”***

**AND JESUS SAYS, “OH, REALLY? TRY A TASTE OF THIS.”**

**THE OTHER SAYS, “THIS IS A CRISIS! TRADITION SAYS THAT WHEN A PASTOR LEAVES, IT’S A BAD OMEN FOR THE FUTURE OF THE CHURCH!”**

**AND JESUS SAYS, “OH, REALLY? TRY A TASTE OF THIS!”**

**AT THAT WEDDING FEAST IN CANA, IT’S NOT LIKE JESUS JUST STEPPED IN & HELPED THEM AVERT A DISASTER BY KEEPING THINGS EXACTLY AS THEY WERE – JUST KEEPING THE EXACT SAME QUALITY OF WINE FLOWING FOR THEM.**

**NO – HE GAVE THEM SOMETHING FAR BETTER!**

**LOOK AT WHAT THE STEWARD SAID TO THE BRIDEGROOM – “...YOU HAVE KEPT THE GOOD WINE UNTIL NOW!”**

**WHEN JESUS INTERVENES IN A DISASTROUS  
SITUATION, HE DOESN'T JUST KEEP THINGS AS THEY  
WERE – HE MAKES THEM EVEN BETTER THAN  
ANYONE COULD POSSIBLY HAVE IMAGINED!**

**YOU KNOW THAT'S ALWAYS BEEN TRUE FOR YOU,  
HASN'T IT?**

**IN YOUR PERSONAL LIFE, WHEN YOU THINK THE  
WINE HAS RUN OUT –**

**- WHEN YOU THINK YOU'VE COME TO THE  
BOTTOM OF THE BARREL IN YOUR WORK LIFE OR  
YOUR HEALTH OR YOUR RELATIONSHIPS OR YOUR  
FINANCES –**

**- WHEN IT SEEMS AS THOUGH THE FUTURE HAS  
NOTHING GOOD IN STORE FOR YOU –**



**- IT'S IN THOSE TIMES MORE THAN ANY OTHER  
THAT JESUS INTERVENES AND SAYS, "*TRY A TASTE OF  
THIS!*"**

**IT'S IN THOSE TIMES THAT WE NEED TO HEED  
THE WORDS OF MARY & "*DO WHATEVER HE TELLS  
YOU!*"**

**AND YOU KNOW IT'S ALSO TRUE IN THE LIFE OF  
THESE TWO – YES, I'M GOING TO SAY IT REGARDLESS  
OF WHETHER ANYONE LIKES IT OR NOT – IT'S TRUE  
IN THE LIFE OF THESE TWO *MERGED*  
CONGREGATIONS.**

***YOU KNOW IT'S TRUE, DON'T YOU?***

**YOU KNOW IT'S TRUE BECAUSE WHEN YOU THINK  
ABOUT THE COUNTLESS UNSEEN GUESTS WHO ARE  
ATTENDING THIS WEDDING FEAST – YOU KNOW WHAT  
THEIR THOUGHTS ARE ABOUT ALL OF THIS.**

**I'M THINKING OF GUESTS LIKE JIM & BEA  
BARRETT, IKE & LIZ WARD, BILL LEEDY & DAVE  
KUHS.**

**I'M THINKING OF VENETA & FLORENCE BRIZIUS &  
PAULA LEWIS, MIDGE FRITZ & DOROTHY AUD.**

**I'M THINKING OF JULIE PRINSON & JEAN RUNKEL.**

**I'M THINKING OF JIM STEVENS, RALPH TATE &  
IVY BENDETTI.**

**I'M THINKING OF THESE UNSEEN GUESTS &  
LITERALLY THOUSANDS UPON THOUSANDS OF  
OTHERS WHO ARE LOOKING UPON US FROM A  
HEAVENLY ABODE & SAYING – “*YES – HAVE A TASTE  
OF THIS - CONTINUE TO DO WHATEVER HE TELLS YOU &  
TOGETHER – TOGETHER – WE CAN ALL DRINK TO  
THAT!*” AMEN.**

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