

Sunday - January 17, 2010
Pastor - Rev. Paula P. Werner
Sermon - **Jesus Responded and So Must We**

Scripture John 2:1-11 *“May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be formed by your grace for you are our Lord, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.”*

A wedding story....Most of us like wedding stories. However, we like our weddings to go without any hitches everyone wants the perfect wedding..... and with all the planning, scheduling and effort, they usually do proceed picture perfect. In all the weddings I've performed I can only recall difficulties at two, in one the mother of the groom upset the groom, and HE was the one crying before the ceremony instead of the bride and in another over here at Quantico, the MPs were threatening to arrest the Maid of Honor who had been speeding on base trying to get to the chapel on time..... and then there was the organ, whose middle C note could not be stopped. Wedding problems.

In this Gospel lesson from John, we hear that Jesus was at a wedding where there was a problem. The wine was running out. That was considered a real embarrassment, an issue in those days when the wedding festivities went on for 7 days! Hospitality dictated that there be plentiful food and drink for your guests.

Jesus, his disciples and even his mother, Mary, are at this wedding. There are several parts of this story that puzzle us. So let's think about it a bit. Jesus' mother informs him that "they have no wine." Jesus responds to her, "Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come." In John's gospel, Mary is never called by name, but always "the mother of Jesus" and here he speaks to her as "woman." Jesus' response sound harsh to the modern ear, but the response is neither rude nor hostile. Jesus frequently addresses women with the greeting "woman", although it is a bit unusual to speak to one's own mother in that way. It creates a distance between Jesus and his mother by playing down their personal, family relationship. The statement, "What concern is that to you and me?" is more a sentence of disengagement, not rudeness.

Then the explanation comes of Jesus' hesitation to become active in this problem.. Jesus' "hour" --- the time for him --his glorification (in other words, the beginning of his ministry which will end with his death, resurrection, and ascension) he says is not yet to be. Jesus is following plans by God, not his mother or any other circumstances.

Jesus' mother apparently is totally confident in Jesus, for her response is, "Do whatever he tells you." She is not dissuaded from her initial belief that Jesus can do something about the lack of wine, but she recognizes that it is up to him to decide how and when.

Then we have an explanation of how this miracle came about. There were 6 stone water jars used to hold water for ceremonial washing. Six is a number in Judaism meaning incomplete or falling short. Stone jars of water

would be placed somewhere convenient so that people could wash their hands at the appropriate times. We can assume that the people at this wedding would wash before and after each meal – this involved using a special cup to pour water from the stone jars over each hand in turn 3 times, making sure the hands did not touch one another and transfer any ritual impurity during the process. Hands would be washed after sleeping for 20 minutes or more, after going to the market place or having any sort of contact with anyone or anything ritually unclean. Having a houseful of guests for a week meant lots of hand washing going on, so the bridegroom had accumulated 6 of the great big stone tubs in order to hold enough water.

Jesus did not come to this wedding intending to work – to do a miracle – not intending to begin his ministry or show himself. But stuff happens – life happens, difficulties occur, there are challenges and problems and we have a decision --- do we get involved and do something, or do we just watch, read about it, observe?

Jesus did not come to the wedding intending to do anything. He did not want to reveal His power yet, He had a clear sense of timing (which we discover elsewhere in the gospels) and this was not yet the time for miraculous displays. Yet even though it was not in His own interests, He still helped out. The bridegroom faced serious social stigma for failing to adequately cater for his guests. Jesus relieves the tension of this situation. He could have very easily told those servants to hitch up the cart and go to the market in Sepphoris for wine and told the master of the banquet to distract everyone for a few hours until they got back, but Jesus sacrificed His own agenda for the sake of serving others, and in doing so set an example for us to follow..... you and I often have more than enough going on in our lives and we really do not wish to get involved in one more thing. That's understandable..... but that's not what Jesus' example teaches.

One learning from this miracle at the wedding in Cana of Galilee is that Jesus sacrificed his own agenda for the sake of serving others.

A second learning is that Jesus gives of his best. The wine is not just mediocre. It is excellent. The wine is more than good enough to save the bridegroom's reputation as a good and generous host. Jesus has given of his best to another. Our learning from this is that giving of our best is what we are called to do. Jesus sacrificed his own agenda for the sake of serving others and Jesus gave of his best. These are two lessons for us today..... and they are important lessons to instruct us with the crisis that has occurred in Haiti.

Jesus went to a wedding thinking he was going to relax, be with family and friends, enjoy the food and drink, tell stories, laugh, enjoy him-self. But a need presented itself and he sacrificed his agenda for others. In the poorest island nation in this hemisphere, a terrible earthquake occurred --- an act of nature. And no matter what you think of their government --- corrupt, likely, inefficient, yes; there are tens of thousands dead and millions displaced, hurting, thirsty, hungry. What ought you and I to do? What might we sacrifice in our agenda this week to help?

One way you can begin helping even this very hour is by responding at the close of the service when I ask you to give to UMCOR. Let me assure you that UMCOR, the United Methodist Committee on Relief is in Haiti at work. After all, UMCOR has been there for decades working building hospitals and offering care. In fact, the Rev. Dr. Sam Dixon died when his hotel caved in on him – he was our Dep. Secretary of UMCOR, at work in Haiti. 100% of all you give goes directly to the work there. The administrative costs are already paid for through our One Great Hour of Sharing each year. Make your checks out to Advance #418325.

Secondly, if there are those of you who would like to go and work there, please know that it will be mid-March before any United Methodist Volunteer in Mission teams go down --- there is just too much chaos for those not used to dealing with these situations. Meanwhile, you and I can make health kits --- that's one of the things we're asked for. A health kit costs \$12 to put together. You could contribute to that or bring in items or a full health kit ---- Bob has a handout with the specific items to be in it. Thousands of these will be assembled by Methodists through the country and sent.

What ought you and I to do? We can turn water into wine.... Jesus didn't just stand by and commiserate and say "tut, tut, too bad about the wine. Why didn't the host plan better. " Jesus took action. Jesus helped. So that's the role model you and I are given.

And we are to take action through our prayer..... Because prayer changes things and prayer changes us. So I've set up our worship time this morning that we might have a longer prayer time today in recognition of all the prayer needs before us. Let us begin that part of our action now by gathering our personal and individual prayers

???????Our prayer time will be bracketed by singing --- it has been said that singing is praying twice. We'll sing to focus our thoughts, then Carole will continue playing that hymn as I pray aloud on your behalf, then there will be a silent time. Carol will then begin playing another hymn and we'll sing, I'll pray and there will be quiet time..... this will be the format for this prayer time. Holy Lord, we pray for those who suffer in body and mind. So many names of hurting, sick persons are on our church prayer list, so many are ill. We pray for healing. We pray for strength, stamina for those who face unrelenting pain. We pray your comfort for those who are terrified by their diagnosis. We pray for those family members and loved ones who are suffering watching their beloved ones suffer. O Lord, we remember those with mental illnesses. We pray for good therapies and counselors, for a ready supply of drugs to alleviate the disfunction, for understanding in our society for those who must live with and cope with mental illnesses.

Gracious protector of us all, we remember those who are in service to our country and stationed in far-away places. We pray for their safety. We pray for a respite in their loneliness. May their days and duty pass quickly. May their mission be just and worth-while. May the families they

have left behind be strong. May the marriages remain loyal and loving and the relationships within the family remain true.

El Shaddai – God Almighty, remind us that this world is yours. You created it, you have planned for it, and all you do is good. When troubles come, help us to remember that you are in control. El Shaddai, there are so many in our country and around the world who have lost their jobs – their livelihood. They do not know where they will find work. They do not know how they will live and provide for their families and pay their bills without a paying job. They are frightened. El Shaddai, God Almighty, may they feel your presence. May they be open to all possibilities, for you are a God of possibilities. May your Holy Spirit bring them hope. Instill in our leaders in government and business the desire to do everything possible to create a better economy, a more just society.

O Jesus who said, “suffer the little children to come unto me for of such is the kingdom of heaven”, we pray for children. We pray for our own – that they may grow up knowing you, and be full of good character and kindness. That they may be strong against the forces which try to get them off-track and into self-centered, greedy, and hurtful ways. O Lord, when we cannot be there beside our children to guide them, we pray for your presence. May they never forget who they are and whose they are. We pray for little children all over the world, --- those who have to pick through garbage to find something to help them to survive another day, those who have been enslaved in the sex trade of evil adults, those who are abused, and hurt, for those who have no one to love them. May your love, O Jesus, so touch another person that that love will be visible to the needy child. We pray for little children who are orphaned, who are starving, who have no one to worry about them. For the little ones who sit beside their dead mothers in Haiti, waiting for them to wake up.....

O Jesus, we pray.

Comforting Lord, we pray for those alone. As they mourn the loss of their loved one who gave companionship to their days, we pray that you may be very real to them. We pray that those who feel so alone might try to reach out to others and that we – the others—might be open and understanding of their need, and offer our friendship, our caring. You, O God, have never left us truly alone, help each of us to know how to open ourselves to your presence.

God, our rock, we pray for those whose souls and minds are doubting. You, O rock, are steadfast, never failing, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent --- grant that our doubts might be met by a sense of you.... Send, O Lord, someone, some word, some song, some gesture, some sight of beauty to meet the questioning heart – to remind the doubting one that you, O God, are great, are good, and are ever involved with your creation.

Almighty One, we pray for wrongdoers --- and know that we are praying for ourselves. We are not the people we like others to think we are. We are afraid to admit, even to ourselves, what lies in the depths of our souls. But we cannot hide our true selves from you. You know us as we

are, and yet you love us. Help us not to shrink from self-knowledge. Teach us to respect ourselves for your sake. Give us the courage to put our trust in your guiding power. Raise us out of the paralysis of guilt into the freedom and energy of forgiven people.

8. We pray your guidance on us in this community of faith called St. Matthias. Lead us to have your vision, to be followers and disciples who bring glory to you and to the name Christian. Give us generous and forgiving hearts. Lead us in all our ministries and programs, the work we do, the words we say. We pray for the worldwide church, especially for missionaries and workers in difficult places and situations. We pray for health and security, for commitment and purpose, for health and stamina for all those doing your work. We pray particularly for those aid workers in Haiti now. For Joy and Kerry Keeves with New Vision Ministries, for all UMCOR workers, for those who are working under a vast umbrella of different but helpful organizations. God of compassion please watch over the people of Haiti, and weave out of these terrible happenings wonders of goodness and grace. Bring comfort to those whose lives have altered so much in the last week and who suffer greatly. Surround them with a sense of your present love, and hold them in faith. Mercifully embrace those who are frightened. Look with love and compassion on those who mourn. Give strength to all who offer care, support and rescue efforts during this time. Guide us as a church to find ways of providing assistance that heal wounds and provide hope. Help us to remember that when one of your children suffers we all suffer; through Jesus Christ who was dead, but lives and rules this world with you.