

SERMON  
2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Epiphany – Lectionary 2  
January 17, 2010

Isaiah 62:1-5  
Psalm 36:5-10  
1 Corinthians 12:1-11  
John 2:1-11

Brothers and sisters in Christ, grace to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus, who is the Christ. Amen.

In every marriage ceremony, there is always something that goes wrong. Trust me on this one. Let me give you an example: A young couple, very much in love, were getting married. Susan, the wife to be, was very nervous about the big occasion and so the pastor chose one Bible verse that he felt would be of great encouragement to them.

The verse was 1 John 4:18 which reads: “There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out all fear.”

The pastor thought that it would be a good idea to get the wedding party more involved in the wedding so he asked if the best man would read the scripture reading.

He told the best man to preface the reading by saying that the pastor had felt that this was a very appropriate verse for Susan. He also told him that he would be preaching on that passage later in the service.

What the pastor didn't realize, however, was that the best man was not a regular churchgoer. Therefore, he did not know the difference between the Gospel of John and the first letter of John. At any rate, he did as he was told. He introduced this reading by saying that the pastor felt that this was a very appropriate verse for Susan.

But instead of reading 1 John 4:18, he read John 4:18, which says; “You have five husbands and the one that you now have is not your husband.”

You see, there is no such thing as a “perfect” wedding. Something always goes wrong. No matter how much you plan and prepare, problems arise. Some are small problems, and some are big.

This morning, we come to look in on a wedding that had a big problem. The wedding took place in the town of Cana of Galilee. Cana was an inconspicuous little town that lay outside of Nazareth. Cana had no social prominence in its day. In fact, it took biblical scholars 1800 years before they could figure out just exactly where this town was.

You see, weddings in Israel at that time were long celebrations that usually lasted a week. The wedding ceremony would take place late in the evening after a time of feasting. The father of the bride would take his daughter on his arm.

And with the wedding party in tow, he would parade through the streets of the village so that everyone could come out and congratulate the bride. Finally, the wedding party would arrive at the home of the groom. The actual wedding took place in the front doorway of the groom’s house.

After the wedding ceremony, the bride and groom walked through the streets accompanied by flaming torches. People would come out and wish them well. They then returned to the groom’s house.

There was no such thing as a honeymoon. No, the couple kept an open house for a week. They were treated like royalty. They dressed in fancy clothes and many times actually wore crowns on their heads.

Whatever desire they spoke for... they received. Their word was law! And the groom’s family was expected to provide all of the refreshments for this week of festivities.

So as the story goes, during the wedding celebration, they ran out of wine. Now this may not seem like a big deal to us. But in those days, this was a very big deal! You see, to the Jewish people, wine symbolized joy. A joyous celebration without wine was not a possibility. Therefore, when the wine runs out, the party stops.

You can just hear the bride now; “My wedding day is not supposed to be like this! I’m supposed to be filled with joy. But instead, I’m worrying about what everyone is going to say about us when they discover that we have run out of wine!”

Maybe some of you have had similar thoughts. “Marriage is not supposed to be like this – the arguments and the disappointments.” “Parenting is not supposed to be like this – the struggles and the anxieties.” “Christians are not supposed to behave like this.” “Friends are not supposed to turn on you like this.” “Loved ones are not supposed to die like this.”

Things don’t always go as planned. And when they don’t, our joy seems to fade. For some of us, our joy is running low these days. We thought that we had enough to make it through this period in our life, but we were wrong. Oh, we can put on a good front, but underneath, there’s not much joy to be found.

We may not even know where our joy went. Perhaps we just woke up one morning, and our supply had been drained. Or maybe, it was lost over a period of time – weeks, months, or even years.

Perhaps things have happened to us that we didn’t anticipate that has stolen our joy? Maybe there have been people that have come into our lives that seem to drain the joy right out of us? Perhaps some catastrophe in our lives has just about eliminated any joy we might have had.

This past week, we have been hearing of the horrific events that have occurred in the country of Haiti. As I watched the news, I couldn't help but think; where is their hope? Where is their joy?

Then I saw one report of a mob of people coming together to march down the street. They were not looting or throwing stones. They were not protesting and screaming because of the lack of aid. No, they were singing; they were chanting hymns of praise and thanksgiving. They were offering prayers to God. They were expressing joy!

How could they be experiencing joy, I thought, in the midst of such devastation? I believe that that kind of joy can only come from God who says to his people; "I am with you in your time of suffering; I will be your source of strength." For we know that our true joy comes only from our God.

Let me give you a few quotes from Scriptures:

I cried to my God for help

God is our help and our shield

God is an ever present help in trouble

Where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord

I have had God's help to this very day.

Jesus said; Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

Do we get the picture? Could it be that the answer is so simple? Can Jesus be the one to restore our joy? He did it in his first miracle at that wedding in Cana. And he just didn't give a little joy. He gave an abundant amount of joy. He also didn't give some cheap low quality joy. He gave the best. Jesus wants to restore the joy in our lives as well.

"I have everything I need for joy!" Robert Reed said. His hands are twisted and his feet are useless. He can't bathe himself. He can't feed himself.

He can't brush his teeth, comb his hair, or put on his underwear. Strips of Velcro hold his shirts together. His speech drags like a worn out audiocassette.

Robert has cerebral palsy. The disease keeps him from driving a car, riding a bike, and going for a walk. But it didn't keep him from graduating from high school or attending Abilene Christian University, from which he graduated with a degree in Latin.

Having cerebral palsy didn't keep him from teaching at St. Louis junior college or from venturing overseas on five mission trips. And Robert's disease didn't prevent him from becoming a missionary in Portugal.

He moved to Lisbon, alone, in 1972. There he rented a hotel room and began studying Portuguese. He found a restaurant owner who would feed him after the rush hour and a tutor who would instruct him in the language.

Then he stationed himself daily in the park, where he distributed brochures about Christ and talked to people about his faith. One woman he talked to became his wife, Rosa.

Robert now speaks in different churches around the country. Other men carry him in his wheelchair onto the platform. They lay a Bible on his lap. His stiff fingers force open the pages. Robert could ask for sympathy or pity, but he does just the opposite.

He holds his bent hand up in the air and boasts, "I have everything I need for joy." His shirts are held together by Velcro, but his life is held together by joy.

There is no such thing as a perfect wedding. There is no such thing as a perfect life. There are horrific disasters in life that can shake us to our core. But that doesn't mean that our lives can't be filled with joy. Not when we open our lives to the source of all joy. It's there for each and every one of us. It is a gift – a gift of love – the gift of Jesus. Amen.

May the peace that passes all understanding be with you now and for life everlasting.  
Amen.

Can any of you tell me what a wedding is? Have any of you ever been to a wedding before?

How about have any of you ever been in a wedding, perhaps a flower girl or a ring bearer?

Weddings are usually fun, aren't they? Everyone is happy and there is usually a big celebration after the wedding. Maybe there is a dance and a lot of good food.

In our Bible story today, we heard about a wedding. It was a wedding in a town called Cana. Right in the middle of the big celebration, they ran out of wine. Now this was a big deal. Mary, the mother of Jesus was at the wedding and she didn't know what to do. There was no stores that they could go to and just buy some more. So do you know what she did? She went to Jesus for help.

And Jesus took some jugs of plain old water and turned them into wine. This was a miracle that Jesus did. He did many more miracles after that.

This was a wedding where something went wrong, but Jesus was able to help.

Sometimes our parents or brothers or sisters or even friends can help us, but sometimes it feels like nobody can help us.

So the good news of this story is that everyone needs help in their lives, and Jesus is always there to help us. We can always go to Jesus when we need help. When we are sad or mad or when we feel that nobody else can help us, Jesus is there. Let us pray.....