

Wednesday, June 17, 2020

A wedding in Cana

- Pastor Hank French

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine" (John 2:1-3).

*You cause the grass to grow for the cattle,
and plants for people to use,
to bring forth food from the earth,
and wine to gladden the human heart,
oil to make the face shine,
and bread to strengthen the human heart (Psalms 104:14-15).*

When I was a seminary student, I was assigned to St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Minneapolis to get some on-the-job training in ministry. Shortly after I began at St. Paul's, the pastor asked me to preach—it would be my first sermon. The Gospel lesson was the story of the wedding in Cana where Jesus turned water into wine after the wine ran out during the wedding party.

My sermon pointed to the fact that Jesus seemed to "like a party," seemed to like celebrations of life like weddings and other social gatherings. When the religious leaders criticized him for gathering with the "wrong people," Jesus shook his head in exasperation and remarked, "The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, 'Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!'" (Luke 7:34).

Then I quoted from Psalm 104 and noted that God had made "wine to gladden the human heart, oil to make the face shine, and bread to strengthen the human heart." And I went on to say that, for me, a glass of good wine, a loaf of good bread, a chunk of good cheese and good friends to share it all with, along with a good conversation, was the kind of celebration of life that Jesus seemed to value.

After worship was over, I was drinking a cup of coffee and eating a donut in the fellowship hall when an elderly woman walked up to me with a steely look in her eyes. She said, "You're training to be a pastor, right?" I said, "Yes."

She continued, "And in your sermon you said you drink wine?" Again I said, "Yes."

She continued, "Well you shouldn't!"

I noted that I also said in the sermon that Jesus had turned water into wine for a wedding celebration, and that he obviously enjoyed a glass of wine at meals with his followers.

"She responded. "I never liked that about him, and I don't like it about you!"

Above all else, Jesus cared about a healthy relationship with God and healthy human relationships. His religion was not a rules-based religion; it was a relationship-based religion. Whatever

diminished, damaged or destroyed healthy relationships he was against; whatever nourished, enhanced, strengthened healthy relationships he was for. And we should be the same.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you for caring more about people than about rules; help me to do the same. Amen.