

Epiphany 2 Year C
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How do you know that Jesus was Jewish? He went into his father's business, he lived at home until he was 30, and his mother thought he was God. (An old joke)

This, I suppose, is a sermon about Jesus and his mother. You know, last month, when we had that big now storm and I had to cancel services at the last minute because the parking lot didn't get plowed, among the many inconveniences of that day was that I had written a sermon that I really wanted to preach but never got the chance.

It was a sermon about Mary, partly because the gospel lesson that day was the annunciation from the angel Gabriel to Mary, but also because I think it's a shame that those of us in the Protestant domain give so little attention to the mother of Jesus; in large part because our Catholic brothers and sisters hold her in such high regard and give her so much time and attention.

I'm not going to preach that sermon today but before I talk about mother and son at the wedding at Cana, I want to mention a few points from that sermon, which give me a deep and abiding love for Mary.

First, when that 13 year old girl looked at the angel Gabriel and said, "Be it unto me according to your word" she became the first person ever to receive Jesus, and to do so in a more life altering way than you or I will ever know; because, second, Mary is the only one who was with Jesus from the manger to the cross. She never denied him, didn't run for safety when Jesus was arrested, never argued with others about who was greatest.

Mary was always there, always faithful and perhaps most profoundly, Mary was a follower of the child she bore. The woman who changed his diapers and dried his tears, also saw the dramatic

change in him at the age of 30, and rather than write him off as most did in Nazareth, his mother who had treasured the stories of his birth for so long, came to see what she had been waiting for.

And today's gospel lesson is a snapshot of the early stages of Jesus' ministry, when he was rapidly changing from simple carpenter's son to Rabbi to Messiah.

And I thought to put the focus back on Mary because it's such an interesting exchange between mother and son. We get an interesting window into Mary and her relationship with Jesus.

First, we've all been to weddings and we all know what makes for a good one and what makes for a bad one. And isn't it ironic that one of the things in common between the 1st century and the 21st century is that the worst thing that could ever happen at a wedding reception is to run out of alcohol.

That is what happened at the wedding at Cana of Galilee; and that is what prompted the exchange between Mary and Jesus that I now want to look at. "The mother of Jesus said to him 'they have no wine.' And Jesus said to her 'woman, what concern is that to you and me? My hour has not yet come.' His mother said to the servants "Do whatever he tells you."

How would you describe that exchange? I would call it "testy." A mother trying to get her son to do something he really doesn't want to do. A son scoffing at his mother. A mother arguably shaming her son into action by telling others to do whatever he says. What is he supposed to do then? So he complies the water is changed to wine and the wedding is saved.

I love this little snapshot because it is so human. Take out the miracle part and I've had that kind of testy exchange with my mother hundreds of times, and I bet you have to. And I find it very helpful when I can relate to biblical characters as human beings, which makes it all the more striking when we realize that they are having

their testy little exchange about something that is far beyond human ability; turning water into wine in order to save a wedding and to save the host from humiliation.

Regarding Mary, and adding to my previous list of what can be said of her, it is clear in this story that she knew a lot more about Jesus' true identity and about his power than anyone else. "They have no wine," she said with the implied "Do something about it."

Regarding Jesus, we can see that, like most children, he doesn't like being told what to do by his mother, but we also see that he had a sense that his time was coming: "my hour has not yet come."

And while we may think that this miracle is rather trivial, it is worth bearing in mind that one of the primary metaphors in the Bible for the Kingdom of God is that it is like a wedding banquet. Jesus used that metaphor a lot because everybody used it a lot.

The kingdom of God is like a great wedding banquet, but a wedding banquet that runs out of wine is a very bad metaphor for the Kingdom of God, so how very MESSIANIC of Jesus to provide more wine and thus return the wedding at Cana to its intended metaphor.

This story is about who Jesus is, and on the one hand we see in his exchange with his mother that he is so human, while on the other hand we see that in the miracle he is so much more than human, demonstrated for us because his mother Mary knew it all along and pushed him to show us.

So thank God for Mary. We wouldn't have gotten very far without her. Amen.