

THAT IS A GREAT DEAL OF WINE

In the Mary Chapel on the rear wall is an oil painting depicting the Wedding feast of Cana. The servants are pictured filling the water jars. We all know what happens next. Jesus changes the water into wine and comes to the rescue of the embarrassed groom and his bride. End of story. Except it's not. There is the original story. But there is so much more.

What else is really going on in this first of Jesus' miracles as reported in the early pages of the Gospel of John? There are some details in the story that raise questions and others which point us in the right direction. It is not just changing water into wine. It is the water on hand in stone water jars that will be used in purification rituals by the guests as they arrive at the wedding.

Jesus will be transforming the waters of purification into something much better, into a choice wine for the feast of the bridegroom. We tend to think this is a story about a poor young bride and groom. It is really about the Lord Jesus in relationship to all of us humans who are bereft in this life very often. We too have run out of wine. There is no joy in us. The Father knows this and has sent his beloved Son to us to fulfill what Isaiah the prophet said in chapter 25, verse 6: "On this mountain the Almighty shall prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples; a banquet of aged wine, the best of meats and the finest wine."

This story of Cana is about what the Word made flesh has come to accomplish and fulfill. That is why the miracle is so lavish. One hundred twenty to one hundred fifty gallons. A typical wineskin in those days would hold about a quart of wine. This miracle is the equivalent of 500/600 wineskins. This is not simply to resolve an embarrassment. This is to make a statement. Where love is celebrated, The Almighty is. His beloved, Jesus of Nazareth bears within him the power to accomplish all that the Almighty has promised. Jesus is the bridegroom. And his bride? All of us. He betroths himself to us this day and provides lavishly for us. How he will continue to do this over the next three years will play out until we get to Gethsemane, Cross and Resurrection.

And my friends, He does all this for you and me. Despite our weakness, our failures, our selfishness, our sin at times. Our God has made a choice in our favor

and on our behalf. He does not desire to punish us for our misdeeds so much as he desires to wash us clean, strengthen our resolve and give us back our reasons to be joyful. It is all there in that tiny story of the unnamed couple from Cana.

It is the beginning of the redemption, the recreation, the restoration to original innocence. It is the beginning of what will lead to Calvary and beyond. And notice, it is the very one who birthed him after being informed of God's plan, Mary, his mother, who brings to him this particular need and sets the table for Jesus to act. Did she know what she was setting into motion? Where it would lead? The cost to herself? The Holy Spirit who overshadowed her was there prompting her to signal her Son. "My Son, I know that it is time. I know you are ready. I have sensed it for a while now. Son, I want you to know that I am ready too. Because the people—the people are so ready, so yearning for what only you can do for them. My Son, I will surrender myself anew. I repeat what I said to Gabriel: 'Let it be done to me as you say.' My Son, go to them and pour out your life for them. We are both ready."

And so he did, and so she was. And who is it all for? For you. For me. For all the peoples of this earth. The Lord has set his banquet before us. It is not in fullness of celebration yet. That is for full kingdom life. But now, we do get to get a taste. The breads that give life and the wine that brings joy. Let us reflect this day. And be thankful for what is underway. Right here in Ambler too.

May the Lord bless us today and give us his peace.