**[1]** Second Sunday After Epiphany
Sermon Title: The Best is Yet to Come
Scripture: John 2:1-11
Theme: Our best days may be ahead of us. We should be patient in understanding what is in process of being revealed (manifestation).

“Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have had their fill. But you have kept the best wine until now.” (v10)

**[2]** How many times have we heard it said, ‘they saved the best till last.’ It’s a
common saying, but not always true. Sometimes predictive of the ideal, but
unrealistic. Sometimes, impossible to measure what is the best. But assuming it is
possible, it flows from the idea that we give our best to God, our first-fruits, if you
will, a libation of liquids or grains prior to consuming them, a preliminary
dedication to the Lord of what we are about to receive into our bodies. Usually, we
are at our best in the mornings, as we begin our day. Hence, the first-fruits being
the best we have to offer God. We return to God the first, the best, of our produce
before enjoying the rest.

However, in this miracle at Cana, the bridegroom saves the best for last. It is the
reverse order of libations and first-fruits; the reverse order of what is natural. When
the last is best, there is nothing left to do but be grateful and drop the microphone.
In modern weddings, we say “something old, something new, something
borrowed, something blue.” But, in this ancient wedding at Cana, instead of
looking backward to find greatness, we are called to look forward to greater things.
The wedding guests did not exhaust the best of the wine at the beginning, but could
savor the wine throughout, and even more toward the end.

Just think, how would we feel if our firefighters set off all the July fireworks in one big splurge at the beginning rather than at the end? It would feel unnatural. We want the effects to linger with us through the entire experience. What if all succeeding acts in a show fell short of the opening act? Would we not leave early? A disappointing encore? The message at Cana is that the Messiah ushers in a world better than anything we have ever seen before. In fact, “Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, mind has not conceived of what God has prepared for those who have a loving heart (1 Cor. 2:9; Is. 64:4).”

The wedding feast is a foretaste of the meals to come (Ps. 34:8, Heb. 6:5, 1 Pet.
2:3). the Passover meal with the disciples (John 13), a supper of broiled fish [and
honeycomb] in the upper room (Lk 24:42), the breakfast on the shore (Jn 21:12),
the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7-9). It is a reminder of past meals like
Elijah’s meal with the widow of Zarephath, from a jar of meal that never emptied,
a jug of oil that never failed (1 Kgs. 17:8-14). It is also a remembering of past
**[3]** meals such as Ezekiel’s strange meal, eating the scroll of God’s words, filling his stomach with them, words as sweet as honey, but also words difficult to speak, full of lamentation and mourning (Ezek. 3:1-6, Rev. 10:9-10).

The empty water jugs of Jewish purification are filled with new wine, abundant
wine. The miracle at Cana produces some 120-180 gallons (v.6) needed for the
local feast. Like the feeding of the 5,000, or the 3,000, it supplies the need and then
some, as it overflows the need. The miracle at Cana seems much more than just re-
filling water jugs and renewing religious purification. It seems more than just
providing a religious meal for the spiritually hungry and those thirsting for life’s
meaning. The miracle in the Gospel of John gives us insight into the parables of
the other gospels, why we cannot simply put new wine into old wineskins without
ruining the wine, why we must only pour new wine into new wineskins (Mt 9:14-
17, Lk 5:33-39 Mk 2:18-22). The gospel pulls against the constraints of Judaism to
break those bonds and forge a new pathway, a new church that is unconstrained;
old structures, methods and forms, while important in their time, cannot possibly
hold the new.

This section of the Gospel of John is famously known as the “Book of Signs” (the
section of John starting in chapter 13 is known as the “Book of Glory”). The
miracle at Cana is the very first of the signs associated with Jesus’ ministry,
pointing toward the revelation of his glory. This miracle highlights the life-giving
**[4]** blood of Jesus, life-giving water becoming life-giving blood, and symbolizing the ever-flowing fountain of life. It harks back to the first sign of Moses pointing to the deliverance of the people from bondage in Egypt, the water turning to blood (Ex. 7:14-24). It predicts other signs such as water springing from the Rock at the
intersection of Massah and Meribah (Ex. 17), and heavenly bread [manna] in the
desert (Ex. 16). It harkens forward to the Savior’s birth in Bethlehem (the House of
Bread) and his pierced side at Calvary. It is reflective of cleansing, purification,
and sanctification, the traditional symbols of hyssop and scarlet yarn (Ps. 51:7;
Num. 19:6). it is the empowering gift of Christ to fill us with hope. We have
received the Holy Spirit as a foretaste and a pledge of glory to come (Rms. 8:23; 2
Cor. 1:22, 5:5; Eph 1:14). Blessed assurance, a foretaste of glory (Fanny Jane
Crosby).

So, might we be grateful when first and last align, when alpha and omega come together, when worst and best overlay? In a world beyond our experience but within our possibility. Where marriages are not set or fixed in a single day but require a lifetime of commitment. Where the declining never overshadows the becoming. Where heaven comes to earth in the imaginations of our heart. Might we indeed imagine such a world, such a place, into reality?!

**[5]** The wedding at Cana is such a place, such a moment in time. A feast of renewal for the people of God. Giving birth to an extended family (or kin[g]dom) blended out of old and new treasure (Mt. 13:52), where grace always outpaces sin (Rms 5:20; Ps. 106:43-46). The first miracle of Jesus does not bring sadness, but
happiness to the human heart (Ps. 104:15). We are no longer satisfied with fleeting
or transitory love, but desire eternal love, forever love, to meet our needs.
In one of her letters to a close friend, Bartolomeo, Catherine of Sienna writes of a
wine ‘which intoxicates the soul so that the more one drinks of it the more one
wants to drink.’ Speaking to God, she writes: “You are sweetness itself, stooped to
join yourself with our bitterness, your splendor joined to our darkness, your
wisdom to our foolishness, your life joined to our death.” In the deeper wells of
God’s mercy, we find our truest selves, our best selves.

Jeremiah writes that he had become like one who was drunk, sodden with wine,
overcome by wine, in his encounter with God’s word (Jer. 23:9), his heart crushed
within, his very bones quaking over what his eyes read and his ears heard. God’s
word to Jeremiah was like a hammer that breaks rocks into little pieces. When
Jeremiah enters into the joy of the Lord, he finds a new wine that lifts his heart and
steadies his bones. “Because God’s mercies never fail, we are not consumed by
evil; Indeed, God’s mercies are new every morning.” (Lam. 3:22).

The wedding stewards had approached Jesus saying: ‘we have no wine.’ And truly,
they were right. The wines of justice were running out, the wines of wisdom were
running out, the wines of understanding, the wines of charity were running out, the wines of love were running out. What would become of the marriage under such conditions? When Jesus changed the waters into wine, he was renewing the hearts of the people, to seek justice, wisdom, and charity with deeper resolve, to transform fear into love.

On the day of Pentecost, those who gathered to hear Peter were filled with the
Holy Spirit, but perhaps not in the way that we might expect. They appeared to be
drunk at 9:00 in the morning, at the beginning of the day. It was a reversal of what
many might expect. They had emptied themselves of their own individual spirits,
their old wine if you will, and filled themselves with a strange new wine. The wine
of the Gospel filled their veins; the love of God filled their hearts. Happy are those
whose minds are stayed upon thee! Happy are those who hunger and thirst after
righteousness, for they shall be filled! (Mt. 5:6)

The meals of Christ expand the heart and the mind. When we enter into God’s joy,
we lack no good thing, our desires are satisfied, our broken hearts are mended, our
crushed spirits redeemed (Ps. 34)