

1 Epiphany 2 – John 2:1-11

Jesus has always had glory. He has shared divine glory with his Father from eternity. And yet, he waited for his Father to bestow it on him. He waited for his hour to come, when he willingly suffered all even death to win salvation for poor sinners. He humbled himself to the death of the cross. For this, God the Father highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name. It is this name that he shares with us. As a husband share his name with his wife, our Lord shares his name with his bride. We are his holy Christian Church, bearing the name of Christ in our baptism, trusting in this name, and confessing this name.

Jesus is the heavenly Bridegroom. He has come to call sinners to himself, gathering them from the ends of the earth, claiming them as his own bride. He gave his life for his church, cleansing her by his own blood in the washing of water with the Word. It is in this way that Jesus revealed his glory. It is in this way that he has made known the glory that he has shared with the Father from eternity.

And yet, Jesus did not take this glory for himself. He waited for it. He waited patiently for his Father to bestow it. He lived in poverty, with no place to lay his head. He suffered persecution and curses from those who hated him. He bore their sin and God's judgment against sin. He came in the form of a servant, waiting patiently to be exalted and revealed to be the true Bridegroom of his church.

Marriage is a picture of Christ and his church. As the church submits to Christ, so should the wife to her husband. As Christ loved his church and gave himself up for her, so should the husband love his wife. God calls us into one body, giving us various duties to carry out, each according to the faith and gifts he himself provides. So as we live in him, sharing his name, hoping in his kingdom, we also learn to wait for God to exalt us. We wait, because we have his sure promise.

This means that everything you do as a Christian is done in hope. You wait for God's kingdom to be revealed. As you see in a mirror dimly, you wait for the time when you see your Savior face to face. In the meantime, God also teaches you to wait for other things. A man and woman wait to embrace each other as husband and wife. They wait for God to give them children. When you are in need, you wait for God to provide. When you are sad, you wait for God to comfort you. When you are confused or lacking understanding, you wait for God to give you wisdom. Though you must live as a humble servant for a while, you wait for God to exalt you at the proper time. Though you must suffer, you wait for God to relieve your suffering. All the while, you are hoping for the glory of God to be revealed.

You presently have all of God's promises in Christ. Right now, you have the forgiveness of sins through faith. You have his kingdom and righteousness, his eternal life and salvation. Today, you have Jesus Christ as your advocate with the Father, interceding for you, covering you in your baptism, feeding you with his body and blood, visiting you in his words of peace. This is why St. Paul says that Jesus has brought life and immortality to light through his gospel. Right now,

2 Epiphany 2 – John 2:1-11

in the gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed to you. You presently stand forgiven and at peace with God as you walk by faith, even as you wait for God to reveal it to your sight.

Jesus teaches us to wait in hope, because that's what he did. He waited for his Father to exalt him. He didn't rush into his death and passion, even though he anxiously anticipated it. In the meantime, he came as a servant, obeying his Father and showing kindness to his neighbor.

When Mary told Jesus that the wedding feast had run out of wine, Jesus responded, "My time has not yet come." He was teaching something very specific. His signs and wonders were not to be done just to please the crowds. Instead, the miracles of Jesus are meant to reveal his glory. This is the glory of the only begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth. The purpose of his glory isn't simply to amaze people. It is to save the lost and declare God's peace to poor sinners. Just as the angels proclaimed on the night of his birth, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men."

When Jesus told Mary that his hour had not yet come, he was also teaching her to wait. And Mary gives us all a tremendous example. When she told her Son that the wine was running out, he responded in a way that sounded harsh. He didn't call her mother. Instead, he called her woman, as if to distance himself from her. But Mary did not take offense. She received her Lord's words with patience. Just as she always treasured God's Word and the mystery of the gospel in her heart, she did not argue with her Lord even when they sounded difficult. Instead, she waited for him to act.

But Mary also didn't just stand still. When she told Jesus that the wine was running out, she was advocating for the bride and groom. She acted in love for this poor couple. She knew what it was like to be poor. She knew the shame of being a humble maiden in this world, in danger of her husband not understanding how she could be pregnant as a virgin, the trouble of giving birth outside and laying her child in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn, and the terror of Herod hunting her family down. Mary knew what it meant to wait and to have very few people looking out for her. So when she told her Son and Lord about the lack of wine, it was out of sympathy and loving concern for this poor couple from Cana.

Mary was driven by love, because she believed her Lord's promise and she hoped in his glory. She therefore didn't remain still. Even as she waited patiently for her Lord to act, she acted on this hope. She said to the servants at the wedding, "Do whatever He tells you."

This is a great example of faith, hope, and love for all Christians. No matter what your station is in life, God gives you the assurance of salvation through faith in his Son. He gives you hope for the glory to be revealed and the inheritance of eternal life in his kingdom. And he fills your heart with his love to serve and encourage one another as you bear one another's burdens.

Mary advocated for this new married couple. She wasn't interceding as their Mediator. She isn't some co-redeemer with Jesus. This account does not teach us to call on Mary and invoke her merits to help us obtain grace before God. Instead, Mary is an example of how we in Christ's

3 Epiphany 2 – John 2:1-11

church offer sacrifices of thanksgiving. When we help one another, pray for one another, and advocate for one another, this is a response of faith. It is a response of one who trusts in the atoning sacrifice of God's Son and waits for him to exalt us at the right time.

If we take this account of Mary and Jesus to mean that we should ask Mary to intercede for us to Jesus, then we are missing the point. This history of the marriage feast in Cana teaches us that we can go directly to Jesus just as Mary did. She is our spiritual mother, not because she comes to us in times of trouble, as the Beatles song says, but because she serves as an example of faith, hope, and love. This is how we glorify God. It is when we rely on his promise of salvation, wait for his glory, and love one another.

Mary told the servants to do whatever Jesus told them to do. By this she was teaching them to hope in Jesus. She was proclaiming the glory of her Lord even as she waited patiently for him to act. We therefore do the same for one another. Encourage one another with the hope of Christ's promise. Remind one another that if God did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, then he will certainly with him give to us all good things. He will work all things out for our good. So wait on his Word. He will not mislead you. Whatever task he gives you will not be in vain, because he has come to make all things new.

Those who are under the law can't understand what it means to wait for God. They want to be exalted right now. If they wait, then its own their own terms. Instead of waiting for marriage, couples wait until they decide they love each other enough. Of course, this is determined only by their own standards. They don't wait for God to open or close the womb, but they act as if this also is completely in their control. Those who are under the law can never face the sins and troubles of this life for what they are. They can only cope with the truth, ignore it, or twist it to suit their own sentiments. Meanwhile, they lose patience with those who disappoint them, let them down, or hurt them. So when times of testing come and they must suffer in this life, they wither under the heat of the sun and completely despair.

But the hope our Lord gives us does not wither up or despair. You can wait for God to exalt you in his good time, whether he is saving you from embarrassment, from danger, from poverty, or from this sinful and dark world. Whatever cross you are currently bearing, you can know that God has set a limit to it. It's as the hymn goes,

God knows full well when times of gladness
Shall be the needful thing for Thee.
When He has tried thy soul with sadness
And from all guile has found thee free,
He comes to thee all unaware
And makes thee own His loving care.

Jesus calls us to bear our cross and follow him. This isn't to say that he wants us to live in gloom and sadness at every moment, as if you're not allowed to smile or enjoy God's good gifts on

4 Epiphany 2 – John 2:1-11

earth. He often lifts our burdens from us in this life, but this is all so that we would embrace his loving care and learn to wait for his eternal weight of glory, which he has promised us in Christ.

Because we are not just waiting for outward, earthly relief from sorrows and sadness. Much more, we are waiting for what no eye has seen. We are waiting for his glory to be revealed. And we know this glory through the gospel of Jesus Christ even now.

There were six stone jars filled with water, used by the Jews for purification rituals. Such religious washings only cleaned people on the outside. But Jesus turned the water into wine to show us a much greater mystery. Just as wine is given by God to gladden the heart, so the Son of God has come into the flesh to give us eternal gladness. He doesn't make us wait merely for some outward honor. He makes us wait for what he shed his blood to purchase for us.

This first miracle teaches us that Christ has come to bring us new and everlasting joy. And he gives it to us even in the midst of this world's sin and sadness. By this first miracle, he showed his glory to his disciples, and they believed in him. And yet, they would learn also to wait. They learned to wait when their Lord was taken from them, arrested, and nailed to the cross. So all Christians have the joy of the new wine of Christ's salvation. We can be certain that we, his church, are his beloved bride cleansed by his blood. But we also learn to wait for the glory to be revealed. We wait in hope.

So don't despair or give up when you find yourself waiting for the comfort of your Lord. Hold onto his words, just as Mary has taught us. As you bear one another's burdens, whether in marriage, in the home, in your daily service toward your neighbor, or with your fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, you can be sure that your labors and your waiting are not wasted. Your Lord's hour did come. He bore the cross for you and was raised to declare you righteous. Now is the time of his salvation when he declares his peace and grace to you by his Spirit and Word. He feeds you with bread and wine, which he calls his body and blood. And he promises that all who dwell in him will bear fruit. We can count on his words, even when they seem harsh and distant. He is near us, bearing with us all the way even as we wait for him. Let us pray:

Now richly to my waiting heart,
O Thou, my God, deign to impart
The grace of love undying.
In Thy blest body let me be,
E'en as the branch is in the tree,
Thy life my life supplying.
Sighing, Crying.
For the savor Of Thy favor;
Resting never,
Till I rest in Thee forever. Amen.