John 2: 1-11

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. 2Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. 3When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.” 4And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.” 5His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.” 6Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. 7Jesus said to them, “Fill the jars with water.” And they filled them up to the brim. 8He said to them, “Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.” So they took it. 9When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom 10and said to him, “Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now.” 11Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

Thank you for letting me come before you today; it is an honor to be here with you, proclaiming the Word of God and worshiping our Lord together. So thank you. I woke this morning with butterflies in my stomach. This is not an unusual occurrence, as a small bit of anxiety is usually a part of my morning routine. But this morning, those butterflies were flapping a little harder. My clothes were laid out ready, a fresh copy of my sermon was waiting on the kitchen table, ready, and my lunch was packed carefully in the fridge, ready. A shower, breakfast, and brushing my teeth are all that stood between me and my day. As you can see I decided to dress a little more formal today, which I think is only appropriate seeing that we are talking about a wedding in our text this morning. Every time I put on a button up shirt, I always think about the last time I had to get dressed up that way. Sunday mornings, and choral concerts, job interviews, and dates. And of course, weddings.

The tie always seems to take the longest amount of time. I have never been one to get it right on the first try. It doesn't take long for the frustration to come to a head, as the tail continues to reach further than the tie when adjusted to the neck. As soon as I get it just right, I make the terrifying realization that I have made the biggest mistake one can make when getting ready. My Sonicare electric toothbrush is now staring at my tie, knowing that it will soon be coating it with little specks of sensodyne toothpaste. I make it through the brushing without issue. A victory if there ever was one. And as I go to rinse, the tip of the tie slips from my neck and goes plunging into the toothpaste rinse at the bottom of the sink. There is nothing saving myself from this moment. I rip the tie off and stare into the mirror. The butterflies just drop along with my facade. My clothes are crisp and straight, ready, a fresh copy of my sermon is on the kitchen table, ready, and my lunch is waiting in the fridge, ready.... And I am not.

We meet Jesus in this text at a wedding in Cana. The first chapter of John tells us that Jesus has had a busy couple of days prior to the day of the wedding. He comes across John the Baptist who proclaims that the Spirit descended and remained on Jesus and that Jesus "is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit." He has also started to build his entourage, as Andrew, Peter, Philip, and Nathanael have all joined him on his journey. Now I don't think we can assume how Christ may have been feeling. The text suggests that Jesus was pretty steady, mastering that "come and see" line as his disciple outreach program begins to take shape. But I can only imagine the pressure of being the Messiah, the "one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit." During this Lenten season, I often find myself desperately wanting to bear the cross with Christ, but I doubt I could every truly fathom its weight.

Jesus and his disciples are joined by his mother, Mary, at this wedding in Cana. Jesus has prepared for this night. He has showered in the Holy Spirit, ready; He has wrapped his disciples around himself, ready, and he is now at this party to celebrate. As the night draws on, Mary comes to Jesus with an observation. Like any conversation that only one person out of the two wants to have, Mary makes an observation that begs for a response. "They have no wine.” By itself, it seems like a pretty mundane observation. It is getting late in the party and the wine has been consumed. This is the Messiah, the "one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit, the one who men follow. After the last couple days, this would seem like an odd issue to observe to Jesus. Perhaps, bearing the weight of knowing who he is, Jesus gives a bit of a kurt response. He says " Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come." There is more variety in other translations when it comes to the first part of his response. The second part is translated pretty universally. "My hour has not yet come." I would like to posit another translation. Perhaps this is Jesus saying, I am not ready. John the Baptist has said he is the one that baptizes in with the Holy Spirit, ready, and disciples are beginning to follow him, ready, and maybe he isn't.

But what does being ready really mean? How do we know when we are truly ready? When does standing in the bathroom staring at a mirror turn into the confidence to be here before you today? I am sure many of us can think of plenty of moments when we did not feel quite ready for what comes next. Graduations, job interviews, dates. and of course weddings. It's easy to recognize the moments when we just feel like saying, nope, it's not my hour. It is much harder to think of the moments when readiness takes over. That is usually reserved for after the fact observation.

"They have no wine."

"My hour has not yet come."

With an answer like that, it would have been easy for Mary just to drop it, to walk away from this situation as Jesus appears to be pretty adamant in his response. But instead, she turns to the servants and tells them to " Do whatever he tells you.”" The moment in which Jesus says I'm not ready, God reveals through Mary that yes, he is. Readiness is not decided by us. Readiness is revealed to us by God. It is with this act by Mary that the readiness of the Messiah is revealed to us. The servants fill the vessels with water; Jesus transformed the water into good wine. And this was the first of his signs.

I have always thought of this miracle as the college years miracle. Who wouldn't have wanted the ability to change the bottles of Aquafina in your mini fridge into a good wine? Especially during exam time? As I have lived with this text for the last few weeks, I have come to realize this may be the most important of all of Christ's miracles. With no pun intended, this miracle itself is an Easter egg within the story of this wedding. What is Christ's response to his mother's observation, "they have no wine." "My hour has not yet come." What is the action that follows? Christ turns water into wine. It is revealed to us in this story that God was not merely showing Christ's ability to perform miracles. No, God was revealing to us that Christ was ready to be the Messiah, from the water of baptism to the blood of his sacrifice, represented by Christ to us as wine. Within this miracle we see Christ becoming aware of Christ's own readiness. God revealing to God's self that Christ is ready to be the Messiah.

I look into the mirror and see a face filled with fear and doubt. I have seen this look many times across the years. I remember it in the mirror the morning I graduated from high school, the afternoon of my first date with my lady, the morning of my graduation from college and my first job interview. It is the face I saw on my first morning of classes here at Columbia theological seminary. I don't know when that changed, when readiness was revealed to me by God. But here I am, in front of you all, proclaiming the word of God and worshiping the Lord. The words of God in this story suggest that it is not our concern to decided when we are ready. If given the choice of deciding we are ready or not, we may just decide it is not yet our hour. No, we must actively seek the vessels that God is surrounding us with, the areas of our lives where God is pooling the opportunities of our baptism that Christ may transform our lives into a good sacrifice for the Glory of God. It is not our prerogative to decide when our baptism will be transformed into the strength to sacrifice for the glory of God. God will put before us miracles, Christ will make of our lives, blessings to other. We just have to be aware that the readiness to be living testimony to the glory of God is in understanding that we are ready to bring a ladle of good wine to the steward when Christ bids us to do so.

My friends, this is the good news. Readiness is not achieved merely by showers, or prepared sermons, or prepacked lunches. It is revealed by God to us in the moments of God's choosing. I remember speaking to a member of my home church before I decided to come to seminary. We were catching up on each other's lives, and the prospect of seminary was brought up. I told him that I wasn't sure if seminary was going to be in my future or not. He told me that when I decided to go, to let him know. A couple months later, after I made the decision to go to seminary and before I had the courage to make that decision public, I received a card from that person in the mail. Inside the card there was a quote by author Ram Dass , a four-word message, and a check for fifty dollars. The quote said "I would like my life to be a statement of love and compassion, and where it isn't, that's where my work lies." The message simply said "for when you're ready."

Friends, God is trying to reveal to you that you are ready. God is surrounding you with opportunities to be living testimony, to be a vessel through which Christ's life, death, and resurrection, can be revealed to others. If you are like me, worried about what is next, know that Christ is already turning water into good wine. And this is not the wine we have had before. This is not more of the cheap wine on which we are to get drunk. No, Christ, the Messiah, "the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit, has given to us the good wine, salvation, in which we are bid to take ladles to the stewards, to share what Christ has done for us, to be testimonies to the readiness that God has revealed in us and in each other. "Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him." In the revelation of the Glory of God, we believe! When Christ reveals his glory to us, we believe. When Christ bids us to testify to the salvation of others, we believe. We believe. We believe. We believe..... we are ready.

Jesus did this. Jesus does this. Jesus will do this. Thanks be to God.