

January 15, 2023
Text: John 2:1-11

Second Sunday after the Epiphany

Perhaps you're familiar with the words of Scripture from Isaiah 55: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord." What the Lord does, we don't always understand.

We saw that last week in the Baptism of Our Lord, where we came across the fact that God had a mere man baptize Him, and that this God was baptized into a baptism of repentance, despite having no sins of His own of which to repent. Yet God did all this for our sake, and by His working brings us to Him.

So again this week we encounter Jesus not speaking or acting in a way which makes sense to our earthly minds. Yet He does what He does to provide for us and care for us, both in this life and the life to come.

That Jesus' thoughts are not our thoughts nor our ways His ways is seen in His reply to His mother at this wedding in Cana. Mary tells Jesus, "They have no wine," implying of course that Jesus should do something about that problem. Jesus replies, "Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come."

At first pass, it seems like Jesus is being a little over-the-top here, a bit dramatic. After all, His mother is just asking about wine, and maybe could He help out with that, and Jesus jumps clear to talking about "His hour" and how it has not yet come.

Jesus' hour is His passion, His suffering and death upon the cross to pay for the sins of the world. His "hour" is the very reason for which He has been born into this world.

His response to His mother, then, seems a little extreme. Mary wants Jesus to help the new bride and groom avoid embarrassment at their wedding, and Jesus jumps clear to talking about His destiny. It seems like He's out of touch.

Yet Jesus' thoughts are on what truly matters. He hasn't been born to be a wandering miracle worker who uses His power just to make peoples' earthly lives more comfortable or pleasurable. He's not a genie in a bottle, granting wishes to give people whatever they want most.

No, Jesus has come to save people from death and bring them to life everlasting. Compared to eternity, the things that belong only to this life are irrelevant. They don't matter.

Jesus has come to win salvation for His people, that they might spend eternity in His everlasting peace and joy, rather than in the outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. Running out of wine at your wedding might be embarrassing and end the party a little earlier than you'd like, but it's pretty much nothing compared to the eternal torment that awaits all mankind if Christ doesn't go to the cross.

Now, you might think, how could miraculously making more wine interfere with this? Well, there are other instances in Scripture where people fail to understand Jesus' miracles and try to derail Him from His true purpose. For example, when He miraculously feeds thousands, the people want to

forcibly make Him their earthly king, and He has to escape from the crowd. He has to stop teaching about the Kingdom of God because the peoples' minds have totally shifted to worldly things.

Remember too that the devil tempts Jesus with earthly fame and authority, the praise of men, and these will be Christ's if He makes more wine in a flashy, obvious way. No, His hour has not yet come, and that hour is of foremost, even infinite importance.

This priority also shapes how Jesus answers your prayers and cares for you. You may approach the Lord in your prayers with all sorts of requests, problems, and concerns. Perhaps you pray to God about your health, or your family, or your job, or the nation, or any number of things. And yet it seems like God is silent. You may feel like you are getting the same response that Mary got: God saying, "What does this have to do with me?"

You come here to the Divine Service, you receive the absolution, you hear God's Word, you partake of His Supper, and yet when you leave this place, your problems all seem to still be there. Is God saying that your problems are not His concern? Does He care?

Yes, God does care. And in these moments, He would remind you of a similar thing of which He reminded His mother: your hour has not yet come. You will not die on a cross for the forgiveness of the sins of the world, as He did in His hour. But you will still die. And in your hour, the hour of your death, you will enter into eternity.

If you don't have faith in Christ at that hour, you will enter into an eternity of torment and suffering. Your sins and Christ's just judgment of them will land you in darkness, where the flame is not quenched and the worm does not die, where there is no joy, only sadness, no peace, only anger, no comfort, only dread. In hell, there is nothing good, because all good things come from God, and hell is separation from Him.

Yet God doesn't want that for you or for anyone. He says in His Word that He desires all to be saved. He faced His hour on Golgotha so that when you come to your hour, by faith in Him you might spend eternity in His presence.

In heaven, you are cleansed from all sin and all its effects. There is no more suffering, no more sadness, no more fear, no more worry, no more doubt, no more pain. Instead there is only goodness, peace, joy, contentment, love – all flowing from God's presence. That is what God desires for each and every one of you.

And so, He guides your days and steers your path that when your hour comes, you will be with Him. He knows when blessings and peace are what you need, and in those times He will send them. Other times, He knows that trials and tribulations are what is best – perhaps to discipline you when you fall into sin, perhaps to pull you away from idols and back to Him, perhaps to strengthen your faith so that you may help others in their struggles.

If the Lord gave us everything we want, when we want, we wouldn't truly love Him, and we certainly wouldn't trust in Him. Children who are spoiled don't have a truly loving relationship with their parents, but learn to love themselves above everyone else, pushing others away. Our Lord is a

loving Father who wants what's best for His children, and so all that He does, He does to bring you to Him when your hour arrives.

Don't push Him away or reject His gifts because it seems like He isn't answering your prayers or doing what you think He should do. His thoughts are not your thoughts, nor His ways your ways, because He always has your eternal good as His greatest consideration.

This doesn't mean, though, that He ignores your prayers or doesn't see your troubles as worth His time. Again, look at His actions in the wedding. He doesn't tell His mother, "My hour has not yet come," and then just sit there and do nothing.

No, Jesus works to answer her request, and He does so in a way that both isn't obvious and which also provides more than enough. First, He tells the servants to fill up a bunch of giant stone jars used for Jewish purification washings. Nothing flashy or outwardly amazing – for all any of the wedding guests knew, these servants were just going about their duties. Yet when Jesus has them draw some out and take it to the master of the feast, it's now wine. And not just any wine, but the best wine. It is not yet His hour, and yet He still cares for these people, providing for them in abundance.

So it is as God hears your prayers. It may seem like He hasn't heard them, but He most certainly has. He is constantly at work to provide for you, protect you, and defend you.

The ways in which He does all this may not be visible to you, just as His working at the wedding was seen by almost no one, yet He is still at work. The means that He uses may not make sense to you, just as they didn't make sense to those servants filling the jars and taking a cup to the master, but His ways are bringing about the best results.

And this is true not only in your last hour, but in every hour of your life. He promises to give you your daily bread, after all. His ways are not your ways, nor are His thoughts your thoughts, but this is for your greatest good.

What then should be our response to the words and works of Christ? Faith. Trust. We see this shown at the wedding in Mary.

When Jesus gives His mother a seemingly cold and uncaring reply, how does she respond? Does she get mad? Demand an explanation? Tell Jesus He's not acting very Christ-like? Not at all! Her words are those of faith: "Do whatever He tells you." She doesn't know what He's going to do, but she trusts that, as the Son of God, He will do what is best.

The response to this command is then highlighted by the evangelist. Jesus tells the servants to fill the jars, "and they filled them to the brim." Jesus tells them to draw some out and take it to the master, "so they took it." Mary says, "Do whatever He tells you," and they do it. By trusting in Jesus and obeying His word, doing what He tells them to do, all are blessed by Him.

Those words spoken through Mary are the word which the Scripture speaks to you as well. "Do whatever He tells you." Not that you earn your salvation through obedience; Jesus has earned that and freely gives it to you by faith. But this faith then will lead you to trusting in Him and gladly doing what He commands.

Will it always make sense to you? No. Will it always be the way you'd do things? Certainly not! But you are a sinner, with limited vision and corrupted reason. God is perfect. His ways are perfect. His knowledge is perfect. His love is perfect.

He gives you His commandments that you might live as He knows is best for you. He offers you His Word and Sacrament – the good wine which He has kept until now – that you might be given blessings that extend into eternity.

His thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways His ways. Yet listen to His thoughts, follow His ways, do whatever He tells you, for He tells you all this that He might bring you into His heavenly wedding feast.

In the name of Jesus, amen.