

Greetings to you! The theme for our morning's meditation is "Jesus brings joy through the fulfilment of God's gracious purpose." In the gospel reading from St. John we see Jesus and his disciples attending a wedding that took place at Cana in Galilee. This is the scene of the first miracle where Jesus turns water into wine. The miracle is termed as a "sign". The word "sign" is specially used in the Old Testament to indicate normal and supernatural acts that demonstrate the truth of God's word through his servants. In John's gospel the word miracle (*dunamis*) does not occur. However, the miraculous deeds of Jesus show that the promises related to the kingdom of God are actualized in and through Jesus. This incident is not mentioned in any other gospel and takes place in the northern part of Israel namely Cana in Galilee.

In the Old Testament the coming of God for his kingdom results in the gathering of the gentiles to see his glory and the proclamation of it to the nations that have not seen it (Isaiah 66:19). So also the "signs" of Jesus are the revelation of his glory, for the divine king is God sovereignly acting in judgment and salvation through the Son. Accordingly, the kingdom that comes through the Son is the kingdom of God in Christ and the "sign" testifies to it. John does not give us details as to why they ran short of wine. Probably the family was poor and was not able to make adequate preparations or maybe there were more guests than have been expected. The lack of wine in a wedding is a terrible embarrassment, comparable to running out of biryani in our context.

Jesus' mother Mary brings the shortage of wine to his notice. Jesus' answer is, "Woman why do you involve me? My hour has not yet come." The way that Jesus addresses his mother as "woman" rather than mother does puzzle us. He literally says, "What is there between you and me?" He also says that the hour has not yet come. In John's gospel the word "hour" may refer either to Jesus' messianic ministry or to the final hour of his passion and resurrection. Mary unknowingly by her request would embark Jesus to fulfill God's gracious purpose of establishing his kingdom on earth. This, the first of his miraculous signs, sets Jesus on his path that would ultimately lead to the final "hour" - the hour of suffering and glorification.

Mary meanwhile instructs the servants to obey Jesus. Jesus instructs the servants to fill the six empty jars with water which were used for ceremonial purification. Then he asks the servants to draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet. The master of ceremonies not knowing that Jesus performed a miracle was amazed when he tasted the wine, for it was choice wine. It is like serving a *Domaine de la Romanee* which goes for a price tag of over five lakhs a bottle - the very best wine! He congratulated the bridegroom for this unusual treat. Usually hosts tend to serve good wine in the beginning of the celebration and once all the guests had the share of it, wine of poorer quality would be served.

John then records for us that what Jesus did in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory and his disciples believed in him. Miracles show the power of God in action but a sign is even greater for it points to something important and reveals a greater truth. In John's gospel all signs point to the glory of the Son of God so that people will believe in him.

In what sense is this changing of water into wine a sign? What does it point to? In the Old Testament, Isaiah and Jeremiah spoke of a messianic banquet at which there would be abundant wine (Isaiah 25:6; Jeremiah 31:12). Our Old Testament reading brought this fact before us. Likewise the prophet Amos also had drawn a vivid picture of the messianic age, when "new wine" drips from the mountains (Amos 9:13, 14). Therefore the Jews who saw and heard this miracle would have immediately associated a supply of abundant, superior wine with the coming of the messianic kingdom. So by supplying wine, Jesus was symbolically inaugurating the messianic age and his glorious ministry.

Jesus was also showing that he was ushering in a new order which would replace the old. Transformation of water being stored in stone jars for purification rituals into wine is symbolic of the new order that he brings which would supersede the older system of Judaism. The immediate effect of this messianic sign was that the disciples believed in him.

This morning as we look back at this sign we too are reminded and pointed towards Christ who has established his kingdom here on earth. This sign calls us to respond like the disciples and to put our personal trust in him. Our lives would be transformed just like water was transformed into wine. It will bring us great joy because God's gracious purpose is that we might have life and have it abundantly. God calls each one of us this morning to celebrate life as we respond and believe in him.