

2nd Sunday after the Epiphany – 01/19/2025

Many of us here know the anxiety that goes into planning a wedding. Whether large or small there are many variables. Between people, flowers, site for wedding and reception, food & drink, etc. In the end we find out that something will not be just the way we wanted it.

My parents, whose wedding was on May 9, 1959, had the experience of running out of food and drink. My dad grew up out in the country, thus many of his family and friends were farmers and it took them longer to be able to get to the reception which was about 40 minutes or so away. My parents both had large families, thus what they had budgeted didn't seem to be covering. Someone who's family my mother lived with her senior year in high school, after her parents had divorced, provided funds to keep things going.

My parents were in a bind and Elmer came through to keep things going as if nothing had had been wrong. Weddings are always hopefully joyous occasions, but with so many variables, something is bound to go wrong. Thus Elmer, behind the scenes came through and my parent's party went on.

Does this story sound a little familiar to the story that we heard in our Gospel lesson for today? Jesus came through to provide what was needed for the celebration to go on just as Elmer did. Of course he is not Jesus, but Elmer gave of himself and did not make some big announcement as to what he had done. Neither did Jesus as there were very few people who knew the wine was replenished.

When things don't go right at events, the planners often feel shame when they can't turn it around. Elmer knew that and of course Jesus did too. I want to say it is a heart thing and in a sense a humble act. Elmer and Jesus did not want shame to come upon the planners nor did they want to be recognized.

Because of the relationship that my mother had built with Elmer, he felt that he wanted to support her. While my mother lived in their home she took care of their kids while she was finishing high school. Their children who are still living, remember my mother.

With Jesus, I wonder if part of it is the relationship with his mother as she is the one who informed him that the wine had run out. We don't know how well he knew the couple who got married, but he and his disciples attended it. This celebration often lasted a week. Thus, it was quite a chore to keep food and drink going, let alone the cost.

Nonetheless, Jesus felt the need to allow the celebration to continue without a hitch with the replenished wine. This was his first sign as John labels Jesus'

work. So many other signs were done, but were more public and dealt with healings and raisings, etc. This first sign was done in a common ordinary setting so the celebration of this relationship could continue.

It was also done to show his disciples who he was, and it says they believed after they saw the sign done. Jesus' mother seemed to know what he was capable of as she told the workers to do whatever he told them to. Even after he was questioning why he should get involved with it.

Signs in John were about revealing Jesus' glory, they were to help people see who he was, the Messiah. He did not do them to impress people, but to help them believe. Even in this first sign it was because he cared about the people and did not want them to be shamed.

This is what we call grace. He didn't have to do it, but he did out of love for them. When you think about this, it is a model for his disciples, to do acts out of love, out of grace. Jesus had no real obligation, maybe in a sense to his mother, but not to the couple getting married and those who were in charge of the celebration.

From JB Phillips translation we hear from John chapter 1:¹⁴⁻¹⁸ So the word of God became a human being and lived among us. We saw his splendor (the splendor as of a father's only son), full of grace and truth. And it was about him that John stood up and testified, exclaiming: "Here is the one I was speaking about when I said that although he would come after me he would always be in front of me; for he existed before I was born!" Indeed, every one of us has shared in his riches—there is a grace in our lives because of his grace. For while the Law was given by Moses, love and truth came through Jesus Christ. It is true that no one has ever seen God at any time. Yet the divine and only Son, who lives in the closest intimacy with the Father, has made him known.

So, in this first sign in the Gospel of John, Jesus is modeling grace. This was a model for his disciples, for you and me. Jesus is already setting the tone and direction for his ministry and ultimate act of grace, his death and resurrection. We see and experience grace from Jesus through others. Without this, it would be difficult to share grace if we have not experienced it ourselves.

I can say with complete certainty that everyone here in this room has received grace. Number one, our baptism is a means of grace. We have received this gift as infants or adults. As members of the beloved community, we are called to model how we share grace, as Jesus models here in our gospel lesson as well as throughout the Bible. We learn how to share or model grace by experiencing it through others.

In our country and here at Faith things are changing. Through any transition grace is needed. As changes occur, we are called to respond and not react to them. There may be times that we need to step back and clear out as much of the anxiety as we can in order for grace to flow through us.

I am not talking about graciously accepting everything as it is. What I am talking about is being graceful in our responses. When I hear the word reaction, I often think of no thought behind our action. In order for grace to flow through us, we need to take our anxiety to Jesus. This will allow us to think and consult with Jesus before responding. There will be anxiety.

Jesus graciously walks with us and stands ready to listen to our anxieties. This is the grace that Jesus has modeled and continues to model for us through others and is ready to share with us. Once we have realized this grace and given our anxieties over to Jesus, we are ready to make graceful responses to the changes that we encounter.

Just as Elmer and Jesus modeled grace, we are then called to model that grace for others. This is how people see Jesus at work within us and may be able to believe as the disciples did that day, when Jesus shared grace when he performed his first sign.

Let us pray: Gracious God, you sent Jesus to model and share your graciousness. As we have read again the story of Jesus' first sign we see your grace modeled for us. We daily ask and receive your grace, may your Holy Spirit help us to share your grace with others that more may come to believe and continue to share your grace.

In Jesus' name, Amen