

Perfect Timing

Timing is important. What's the most important part of telling a good joke.....timing. Timing is important in jokes, and it's important in sermons. Until I figured out the 2.45 second delay between the live stream video and audio, my sermons looked like old Bruce Lee movies. Timing is important in conversations. Zoom meetings have unexpectedly shown us this. The slight delay in talking and hearing causes train wrecks that we have all been a part of. I was just recently on a Diocesan zoom call where two people kept waiting for the other and then talking over each other, four times, before the loop was broken.

Timing is everything; whether telling a joke, communicating, or successfully navigating through life, and bad timing can get you in a lot of trouble. Which is what makes the wedding at Cana, in today's Gospel reading, such a scene. The timing goes all wrong, but it is easy to miss, because the Gospel simply says that they ran out of wine, on the third day of a wedding. No big deal to us—but in this time and place—running out of wine isn't a little embarrassing, it's a disaster. Wine isn't just a social lubricant, it's a sign of the harvest, of God's abundance, of gladness and hospitality. So running short on wine, is running short on blessing. Timing is everything, and the wine has run out before the wedding has.

To make matters worse, Jesus' mother seems off on her timing. "They have no wine," she says to her son, and Jesus replies somewhat sharply, "Woman, what concern is that to you or me? My hour – my time – has not yet come." But Mary knows better. She turns to the servants and tells them simply and clearly, "Do whatever he tells you."

Well, you know the rest of the story. Jesus instructs the servants to fill six large stone basins with water and to draw some of that water, now turned to wine, and take it to the steward. Suddenly this couple has six basins of fantastic wine, enough for three more days. No one could now leave this wedding thirsty, for abundance and blessing overflowed.

Timing is everything—and not just in today's reading—but across John's entire Gospel. In fact, there are two kinds of time that animate John's imagination. One is *Chronos*, the kind of time with which we count and track the everyday events of our lives. It is the time that is measured in minutes and seconds, hours and days. It is the time we spend standing in lines, or clocking in at work; it's mundane, relentless and ordinary.

But there is another kind of time at play, as well, *Kairos*, a royal kind of time, where all that is predictable fades and what emerges in its place is sheer possibility. This is God's time, and it pierces through the ordinary canvas and clock of our lives at unexpected times to reveal a glimpse of the divine. So when Jesus speaks of his "hour" he isn't speaking of a time and date on his calendar, he's talking about the time when God will reveal his glory through his cross and resurrection, the time when God will be accessible to all, once and for all.

That time, that hour, Jesus said on the 3rd day of this wedding, had not yet come. But by the end of that day it had, along with Jesus' first miracle, His first sign. And because it was the 3rd day of the wedding, careful readers throughout history have asked, "Wait a minute? Did you just say it was the 3rd day? As in 'after the 3rd he was raised from the dead?' Indeed. Because whenever there is need and Jesus is on the scene, resurrection and abundance are around the corner.

And knowing this makes all the difference. This peculiarly timed sign, you see, revealed something about Jesus. For every moment that we live in Jesus' special time, ordinary things become transformed. Bread and wine can bear Christ's body and blood. An ordinary hug can convey unbounded love and blessing. The smallest donation of food or money can tip the balance between scarcity and abundance.

Timing is indeed everything, so it is crucial that we Christians learn how to tell time from our master. Yes it's true, 8:30 on Monday morning is real time and so is that pile of work, and emails, and tasks in front of you. But the deeper truth for Christians is that God is always at work in our occupations, our relationships, our family lives. The question is, how might we look at all the ordinary, mundane elements of our lives if we believed God was in them with us, working through them to care for His people. Because according to Jesus and the Gospel of John, whatever time we think it may be, it is also God's time. God's timing is perfect, and in Him all things are possible, now and always, amen.

--This Sermon is based on Rev. David Lose's sermon "Learning to Tell Time"