

“The First Miracle of the Ministry”

Today’s Text relates to the theme of Jesus gathering his disciples. The wedding happened only two days after Jesus met Nathanael, so this feast was only a few days after Jesus began collecting disciples. This Text also gives insight into Jesus’ relationship with his Mother. Their conflict in this situation was somewhat humorous, strange, and familiar.

Most of us, who are adults, have experienced our mothers and/or fathers attempting to get us to do or say something against our personal desires or judgment. Such confrontations are somewhat awkward when they occur in front of other persons, especially one’s friends or co-workers. Have you endured such an embarrassing situation, as an adult?

The event reported in today’s Scripture took place when Jesus was about 30 years old. A good number of the members of Round Grove United Church have heard me tell the story of how my wife, Margaret, and I first met, so if that is the case for you, please excuse me as I share some of that story again. Just before my 22nd Birthday, when I was home in Fort Worth for the Thanksgiving Holiday of the University of Texas at Austin, my parents shared with me their recent experience with a couple from Corsicana, Texas. This occurred during my dad’s business trip to San Francisco. Their story included how they literally bumped into this other husband and wife, while riding on a trolley car, and then, they spent a considerable amount of time with this other Texas couple. The conversation with my parents about that trip was going well but an alarm bell went off when they told me this other couple also had a child attending the University of Texas in Austin – a daughter! Now, if my parents had pushed me to look up the Sprinkle’s daughter, I most likely would have sought to find out where she was and then I would probably have done my best to make sure I was never near her! Fortunately, for me, my parents stopped short of suggesting I even look up the other couple’s daughter. A few days later, a friend of mine and his girlfriend, invited me to attend a Christmas Tree Trimming Party in his apartment, so I could meet her big sister in the sorority and maybe, eventually, ask her out. Her big sister was Margaret from Corsicana. At that party, the sorority big sister mentioned how her parents had recently returned from a trip to San Francisco. I asked a few questions and, then, shared my realization that our parents had met on a Trolley Car in San Francisco! Bringing our long story to a quick conclusion, I not only dated Margaret Sprinkle but just over 40 years ago, we were married at First Christian Church in Corsicana! Just how much a parent can get away with when pressuring an adult child to do something can be very important!

The confrontation between Jesus and his mother, Mary, led to his first public miracle. He performed it because Jesus’ mother was very concerned about the success of a wedding feast in Cana. She knew the wine had run out, so she went to her son saying in **verse 3b**, *“They are out of wine.”*

Jesus had collected some of his disciples a few days earlier and had not started doing his public ministry, yet, Mary still expected him to save the feast. His response was not very receptive. **Verse 4 reports**, *“‘You must not tell me what to do,’ Jesus replied. ‘My time has not yet come.’”* Our pew Bible gives Jesus’ message but not a literal translation. The Greek more literally says, *“Woman, why is that something between you and me? My hour has not yet come.”* You might recall The Gospel of John Movie version, which we watched for our Scripture Reading was more formal sounding, *“Madame, why is that something between you and me?”* Some scholars have tried to soften this exchange by suggesting his calling her *“woman”* was a term of endearment.

Still, Jesus was not happy with his mother wanting him to perform a miracle in public. Perhaps Mary’s

motivation was a parental desire to help him take that first public step toward the fulfillment of his Purpose. I wonder, when she pushed him to start down that path, was she thinking about the full implications of what it would mean for the length of her son's life – how it brought his death closer? Mary made it awkward for Jesus to avoid doing something during the wedding feast because she told the servants in **verse 5**, *“Do whatever he tells you.”* I suspect Jesus was thinking, “Thanks Mom!” It may well have been that Mary recognized her son needed to be prodded into beginning his public ministry – revealing the Divine Parent's Purpose in Jesus. He may have even felt relieved to have taken that first bold step.

Although Jesus went ahead and performed the miracle of changing water into wine, he limited the knowledge of what he did to his disciples, mother, brothers, and the servants for the Wedding Feast. So, after having the servants fill up with water the jars used in the ritual cleaning activities, Jesus said in **verse 8**, *“Now draw some water out and take it to the man in charge of the feast.”* He did not do miracles to bring him great praise and popularity but to reveal **God's Purpose**. The man in charge of the feast did not know how the wine came to be available. He recognized, however, its quality was the best of all of the wine served!

Today's Text reports Jesus' *“glory”* was revealed to his disciples through that first public miracle. So, the miracle, quite literally, was an example of Jesus fulfilling his earlier promise recorded in **John 1:50b**, *“You will see much greater things than this!”* We have seen previously how Jesus' *“glory”* did not refer to him wanting and creating human praise through manipulation and spectacle. Jesus' *“glory”* was the revealing of his Divinely given Purpose – his being the Ultimate Expression – in the flesh of **God's Self-Giving and Sacrificial Love for all people!** The high points of that revelation were **his Death on the Cross and his Resurrection from the Dead.**

The Gospel of John shows the disciples benefited from this first miracle for **verse 11 states**, *“Jesus performed this first miracle in Cana in Galilee; there he revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him.”* Following verse 11, John reported in **verse 12**, *“After this, Jesus and his mother, brothers, and disciples went to Capernaum and stayed there a few days.”* Unfortunately, Jesus Christ's brothers did not believe in him during his public ministry, although they did welcome the notoriety.

We are called through this Reading to consider the great struggle Jesus went through as he jostled with his mother over when he should begin to use his miraculous abilities in public. We are to give serious thought to how the *“glory”* of Jesus Christ has been revealed to us through Scriptures and our experiences. Further, we are called to demonstrate our belief in Jesus through our inviting others to receive the Good News and through our living changed lives. Part of the celebration during the Children's and Students' Moment was about how Mary Quick has enabled others to receive and experience the Good News, while she served this congregation and, especially our children, during her fourteen years as our Christian Education Assistant! Although she will no longer serve as an employee of Round Grove United Church, she will still teach, and thus, continue to enable our Preschool and Younger Elementary Sunday School Class to grow in their faith, relationships, and life in Jesus Christ. We are all called to invite everyone, without distinction or prejudice. We are also to work for the welfare of the powerless and even the outcasts. **Through us, Jesus' miracles continue!** Amen.