

"Those Who Wait on the Lord Are Frequently Surprised, Never Disappointed"

Text: John 2:1-11

^{ESV}(James 1:16-18) **Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers.** ¹⁷ **Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.** ¹⁸ **Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.** Amen.

Dear Fellow Christians:

It is a most interesting (and informative) exercise to ask of ourselves: "What, exactly, do I expect of the Lord? What, in other words, do I expect the Lord to do for me?" Yet before we even ask the question, we need to lay the groundwork. The first basic truth is that God owes us nothing. The second follows on the first, and it is that since God owes us nothing, we have no right to expect anything from God *except that he will keep his promises to us*. This, of course, speaks not to our deservedness but to his perfect reliability. That means that our *expectations* have to be based always and only on his *promises*, never our own desires or "felt needs."

For this to mean what it should to each of us, individually, we need to hold each of our expectations up to the light of God's Word, and to thereby determine if our *expectations* are unrealistic. We routinely pray, for example, for good health and an extended time of grace. Certainly nothing wrong with that, for God has invited us to bring all of our requests to his throne. Yet God has never promised us good health and length of days, which means we have no privilege of expectation for such things. We often pray for financial security, but God has only given us a conditional promise in that area, and, even then, he is the one that gets to determine what that "security" will look like. The condition that God attached to that particular promise is that we **"seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,"** and when that condition is met, his promise is to supply what *he* determines to be necessary. The context of that promise dealt with those consumed by stress and anxiety over simple daily needs, like food, drink, and clothing. We can therefore have no expectation of more because our God has not promised more. So also we can and should pray that God would give us a spouse, children, protection from all bodily harm, a nice home, vehicle, clothes, and the like, but we have no right to expect that God will supply what he has not promised, and he has promised none of those things. So we bring our requests, but ask that his will be done.

God alone is wise enough to know what will help or hinder our Christian walk. In other words, we "wait on the Lord."

When we thus temper our expectations and demands, and trust our God to make decisions for us on the basis of his divine wisdom, something truly amazing happens – we are frequently surprised, and never, in the end, disappointed. Our text for this morning will so instruct us. That text is found in John's Gospel, the Second Chapter:

^{ESV} **John 2:1-11** **On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there.** ² **Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples.** ³ **When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine."** ⁴ **And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come."** ⁵ **His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."** ⁶ **Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons.** ⁷ **Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim.** ⁸ **And he said to them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast." So they took it.** ⁹ **When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom** ¹⁰ **and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now."** ¹¹ **This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.**

This is God's Word. That God would bless us through the study of these divine words this morning, we pray, **"Sanctify us by Your Truth, O Lord. Your Word is truth!"** Amen.

This has always been something of a startling, even disturbing, text to me. Ask yourself what you would pick for your inaugural, coming out, miracle. If you're Jesus, the sky's the limit. Nothing at all is impossible for you. You could ask the Father to dissolve the moon, remove an entire mountain range, or stop the rotation of the earth. Nothing is impossible, and yet what do you choose to do? Would anyone here have chosen to turn water into wine?

And there's even more to it than that. The miracle was performed in Cana of Galilee. Are you familiar with the place? Neither is anyone

else. It was (and is) a tiny little village about five miles northeast of Nazareth. What was the name of the bride and groom? We don't know. Who was there? Other than his mother and some of his disciples, we don't know that either. What purpose did the miracle serve? On the surface, it made up for poor planning on the part of whoever threw the wedding, and provided only more wine for those who had already consumed all that was planned for. Sum it all up and it almost seems like Jesus squandered a golden opportunity to make a huge splash with his first miracle.

Only Jesus doesn't make mistakes. Ever. We need to dig deeper.

There is an interesting exchange that takes place between Jesus and his mother that led up to the miracle. Our text recorded it for us: ***When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." 4 And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come." 5 His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."*** Our difficulty with this text stems from the fact that we not only read it in English, we hear it with modern American ears.

The fact that Mary involved herself at all with the shortage of wine indicates that she had something to do with the wedding itself. Knowing what she does about her Son, she comes to Jesus and simply presents the problem. Note that she didn't presume to tell Jesus what to do; she says simply, ***"They have no wine."*** Note well this first great example that Mary leaves with us regarding our expectations in connection with our prayers. She did not presume to dictate to Jesus how, if at all, he would deal with the problem that she brought to his attention; she just presented the need.

Our first real problem comes in understanding Jesus' reply: ***"Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come."*** Our American-tuned ears hear *"Woman,"* first of all, much differently than the people of Jesus' day would have heard it. Consider first the fact that Jesus used this same *"Woman"* when he tenderly gave Mary into John's care while he hung on the cross. It was also the same word Jesus used to praise the faith of the Canaanite woman, ***"Woman, great is your faith."*** There is a tone of respect, even love, in the word that does not translate directly into any modern English word. Perhaps the closest would be the word *"Ma'am"* spoken in a most respectful tone.

The next difficulty comes in understanding the words translated, ***"what does this have to do with me?"*** Again to our American ears Jesus' reply sounds both disrespectful and dismissive, as though Jesus were

saying, *"Look, lady, it's not my problem."* He was saying nothing of the kind. In fact there was a communication going on here that was taking place at a much deeper level than first meets the ear. Though she didn't specifically ask for it, Jesus recognized that his mother was asking him to *work with her* on solving the wine problem. His response, literally, was, *"What to me and to you?"* – which of course makes little sense in English. In English we would probably say, *"What do you mean 'us'?"* Jesus didn't come to earth to work with us to solve our sin problem. He came to do the work all by himself, as he must, and to then gift the fruit of his labors to us through faith. So also he continues, ***"My hour has not yet come."*** The "hour" to which he was referring could well have been Calvary, when he, and he alone, would pay mankind's sin debt. This too was necessary for Mary to recognize and to remember. His message to Mary was therefore along the lines of, *"Dear woman, the work I have come to do I must do alone, and that terrible hour will one day arrive."*

We cannot here credit Mary highly enough. She was truly an amazing woman. She got it – immediately. Jesus needed to offer no further explanation. She simply walked away, but before she did, she spoke these words of purest, most trusting faith to the servants, ***"Do whatever he tells you."*** Her Son must work alone to do what he came to do, but her Son could be trusted to do the right thing. What form that "right thing" would take had to be left to him.

Once again we need to learn a crucial lesson from Mary's example. She brought her need to Jesus, and then not only refused to dictate how he must answer her request, she simply walked away and left the whole matter in his divine hands, trusting that his answer – whatever that might be – would be the *right* answer. She didn't stick around to supervise, or to offer her opinions on quantity or quality. Her parting words to the servants were just an extension of that trust, ***"Do whatever he tells you."*** These weren't slaves, they were servants – perhaps even volunteers helping out at the wedding. She could, no doubt, well imagine how they, knowing the problem as they did, could have simply refused Jesus' command – which turned out to be the almost laughable, ***"Fill the jars with water."*** *"We need wine, and he's telling us fetch water?"* Simple obedience left them more than a little surprised with the results – probably more like shocked. Certainly anything but disappointed.

It's often like that with the various elements of the Christian faith, isn't it? We've seen it before – in Naaman, who first rejected Elisha's prescribed cure for his leprosy as too simplistic. We saw it in the

Jews, who simply refused to believe that forgiveness could be theirs as a gift, through faith, without any effort on their part to fulfill all of the obligations of the Mosaic Law. We see a startling parallel still today, where this same Jesus tells us to draw some water, place it in a container, and then allow him, through the power of his Word, to perform the miracle that is baptism. Or when Jesus invites us to gather together, to eat and drink simple bread and wine, and to know that the Word connected to those simple elements will result in the reception of his very body and blood, and the personal seal that his sin payment on Calvary's cross included every single one of our own, personal sins.

To all of this, Mary also speaks to us, as to the servants: **"Do whatever he tells you"** – and you will never be disappointed with the results.

You heard the results of the simple obedience of the servants in our text. Jesus not only turned the water into wine, he turned it into wine that far exceeded their expectations.

Only one question remains: *Why did he do it? Why did Jesus pick this seemingly insignificant event as his first miracle?* Before we answer, ask yourself what Jesus taught you, personally, through this miracle. Didn't he teach us that he is concerned not only with the huge, catastrophic problems in our lives, but even the little things? Didn't he teach us that his divine answer to our humble requests will often surprise, but never disappoint? Didn't he teach us that he does not hear and answer requests based on status or social standing, but also tends to the needs of those considered insignificant by the world?

So why, again, this miracle? Maybe it included all of the reasons just mentioned, but there is more – which runs to the core purpose of all of Jesus' miracles. Jesus performed miracles out of compassion for those in need, but always with the ultimate goal that human beings would see the signs and recognize that he was different from all that came before. In other words, his miracles always worked toward that ultimate goal of calling human beings to saving faith. His mission was not to make mankind more comfortable but to rescue them from the eternal torments of hell. How then did this first miracle serve that purpose? We have a clear explanation in our text and in the preceding chapter. Jesus was just beginning his ministry, and John the Baptist was pointing his own disciples to Jesus. We know of five such men, four by name: Andrew, Peter, Philip, and Nathanael (as least one other was present, whose name we do not know). These men, still perhaps mostly out of curiosity, were following Jesus. They needed more, and Jesus here provided it for them. From our text: **"This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana**

in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him." Through this miracle, and no doubt through the Word that Jesus spoke to them, these key men came to believe in Jesus as Lord and Savior. Curiosity became saving faith. This simple miracle prepared them for that time when Jesus later called them into fulltime service (recorded in Matthew 4).

This sheds a whole new light on this first miracle, doesn't it? It should leave each of us with a renewed confidence in the divine wisdom of our Savior. Trust this Savior – with your prayers, your life, and your salvation – and you may be surprised, but you will never be disappointed. Amen.

Scripture Readings

ESV **Isaiah 62:1-5** For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not be quiet, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a burning torch. ² The nations shall see your righteousness, and all the kings your glory, and you shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the LORD will give. ³ You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God. ⁴ You shall no more be termed Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate, but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her, and your land Married; for the LORD delights in you, and your land shall be married. ⁵ For as a young man marries a young woman, so shall your sons marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.

ESV **1 Corinthians 12:1-11** Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed. ² You know that when you were pagans you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led. ³ Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says "Jesus is accursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except in the Holy Spirit. ⁴ ¶ Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵ and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; ⁶ and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. ⁷ To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. ⁸ For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, ¹⁰ to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹ All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

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The Second Sunday after Epiphany – January 20, 2019

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn – 16 (Red Hymnal)

"Blessed Jesus, at Thy Word"

The Order of Service – Supplement page 12ff. (Brown Hymnal)

The Scripture Lessons: (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

The First Lesson (Isaiah 62:1-5) With what beautiful words the Holy Spirit, through the Prophet Isaiah, foretold the events and benefits we now celebrate and enjoy as members of God's Church. Though the Christian suffers on this earth, the New Jerusalem (heaven) will be unimaginably magnificent. Rejoice, Christians, in your promised inheritance.

The Psalm of the Day – Psalm 118 (Page 29)

The Second Lesson: (1 Corinthians 12:1-11) Since it is God alone that supplies us with our various gifts and abilities, neither pride nor dissatisfaction have any place in the Christian heart. Pride is excluded because we have nothing but what we have been given. Dissatisfaction (or envy of the gifts of others) is excluded because we are what God made us. God grant to each of us thankful hearts that are dedicated to faithfully serving him with the gifts and abilities that he himself gave.

The Confession of Faith -

The Apostolic Creed – page 15 (Brown Hymnal)

The Pre-Sermon Hymn – 764 (Brown Hymnal)

"God of Grace, and God of Glory"

The Sermon – Text: John 2:1-11 (Printed on the back of this bulletin)

**"Those Who Wait on the Lord Are Frequently Surprised,
Never Disappointed"**

The Offertory – (Supplement page 16 insert)

The Post-Sermon Hymn – 800 (Verses 1-3) (Brown Hymnal)

"Go, My Children, with My Blessing"

The Prayer followed by the Lord's Prayer

The Benediction

The Closing Hymn -800 (Verse 4) (Brown Hymnal)

"Go, My Children, with My Blessing"

Silent Prayer

Welcome! - We warmly welcome any visitors who might be with us this morning and invite you to join us every Sunday at this time. St. Paul is a congregation in fellowship with the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) – a conservative Lutheran synod with churches and missions throughout the United States, as well as Canada, India, and Africa. We are glad you are here. Thank you for letting us share the Word of God with you. Please record your visit in our Guest Book, and come again!

Attendance – Sunday (30) Average (38)

This Week at St. Paul:

Today	-9:00 a.m.	– Sunday school and Bible Class
	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship and coffee hour
Wednesday	-6:00 p.m.	– Confirmation Class
	-7:00 p.m.	– Midweek Bible Study
Next Sunday	-9:00 a.m.	– Sunday school (No Bible Class)
	-10:00 a.m.	– Sunday Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship and coffee hour

CLC News – Pastor Rich Kanzenbach is considering the call to Bethel of Morris, MN. Pastor Robert List, who is serving as the vacancy pastor for Trinity of Spokane, is recovering from heart bypass surgery. God called an end to the earthly walk of Pastor Roehl's mother, Eunice, early yesterday morning. The funeral is scheduled for next Saturday in Eau Claire.

Time Out – We are planning the first meeting of our new Time Out Program now that the holidays are behind us. The program is intended to include all adults, along with childcare for any little ones. Childcare will include a Bible lesson, food, and games. The adults will begin with a Bible study, and then move on to the activity of their choice, including the evening meal. The first outing is scheduled to be a game night hosted by Pastor and Sandy Roehl in the parsonage on February 1.

CLC Grade School Tournament – The 34th annual Grade School Basketball Tournament for CLC Youth will be held at Immanuel Lutheran College, March 8-10, 2019 (Friday-Sunday). If you have a child that would like to participate, please see the Pastor. While St Paul will not field its own team, other congregations need players to fill their roster.

Care Packages – Yet another reminder that the Women's Fellowship is again accepting donations for care packages for our four members currently attending school away from home. Those contributing are asked to bring quantities that can be divided into four care packages. The deadline (and final "assembly" date) is two weeks from today - February 3rd. Please contact Sandy Roehl if you have any questions.