

In the name of ✠ Jesus.

It's on "*the third day*" that our text takes place. One has to look back into John 1 to figure out the third day from what. In the first chapter of John, the evangelist marks days from Jesus' baptism. The "*next day*" John the Baptist sees Jesus and identifies Him as "*the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world*" (John 1:29). Again, the "*next day*" John sees Jesus walk by and again proclaims Him "*the Lamb of God*" (John 1:35), and two of John the Baptist's disciples begin to follow Jesus. Again the "*next day*" Jesus calls another disciple to "*follow*" Him, and that one found another, and the two followed Jesus.

So, now it's the "*third day*," or, if you count them all up, the 6<sup>th</sup> day, and like at the creation of the world, as man is formed out of the dust of the ground on the 6<sup>th</sup> day, and the woman out of man and for him, and as God instituted marriage on the 6<sup>th</sup> day, saying, "*Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh*" (Gen. 2:24), so Jesus comes to a wedding feast on this 6<sup>th</sup> day, that "*honorable estate instituted and blessed by God in Paradise, before humanity's fall into sin.*" Our rite of Holy Matrimony affirms it: "Our Lord blessed and honored marriage with His presence and first miracle at Cana in Galilee" (LSB Agenda, p. 65).

But indeed, Jesus' presence there may signal more than simply an honoring and blessing of man and woman uniting as one in Holy Matrimony. It may signal that Jesus as the great Bridegroom has come to restore a relationship with His Bride, a relationship that had been broken by pride and disobedience and sin, to restore it back to its 6<sup>th</sup> day state of perfection.

This, God wants, for we know that creation was an act of love of the God who is love, who through His Beloved Icon created man, male and female, in His image and likeness. And as "*It [was] not good that the man should be alone*" (Gen. 2:18), so that God gave the man a wife, so God, having created all things, could not permit Himself and His creation to be so estranged by sin, that each might remain alone. Man by his sin had taken that which was "*very good*" (Gen. 1:31), and corrupted it. Man caused the separation, but God, in love, needed to restore the relationship.

And He did it through His only Son, Jesus. By Him, God took a forsaken people and made them again His Hephzibah, His Delight, and a desolate creation and called it Beulah, Married. Yes, God sent His own Son as a Bridegroom to bring righteousness to the unrighteous and salvation to those in bondage to sin.

And we know how the Son did it: by being lifted up unto death. St. Peter says, "*Christ ... suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might*

*bring us to God*” (1 Pet. 3:18)—that He might undo this separation. You know how St. Paul says it: “*Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish*” (Eph. 5:25-27).

And you hear it in these verses: first comes the sacrifice, Christ suffering and dying to sin once for all (Rom. 6:10), earning life and salvation for all mankind, and then distributing the grace of His shed blood through His sacraments, in particular here, through “*the washing of water with the word,*” or as St. Peter goes on to say: Christ was “*put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit*” (1 Pet. 3:18)—there’s His death and resurrection for us. Then Peter says, “*Baptism ... now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ ...*” (1 Pet. 3:21).

Or as we heard last Sunday, “*Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life*” (Rom. 6:3-4). For it’s Jesus who empowers our baptism—His death and His resurrection are the source of our righteousness and salvation. So Paul goes on to say, “*For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his*” (Rom. 6:5).

United...joined together...that’s wedding language. “Dearly beloved, we are gathered here in the sight of God and before His Church to witness the UNION of this man and this woman in holy matrimony.” “Will you ... remain UNITED to her alone” (LSB Agenda, p. 65, 67) “*What therefore God has JOINED TOGETHER, let not man separate*” (Matt. 19:6).

Bride of Christ, this is what we have in Jesus: a “*LORD [who] delights in you,*” for as Jesus, “*the bridegroom rejoices over the bride,*” His Church, so also in Jesus, “*your God rejoices over you*” (Is. 62). But all in its proper time.

At the wedding feast, they run out of wine. Jesus’ mother finds out about it, and seeks out Jesus to remedy the problem. Your text translates Jesus’ response: “*Woman, what does this have to do with me?*” Or woodenly: “*What’s that to me and you, Woman?*” In other words, Jesus is saying, “Mother, you know this has nothing to do with my purpose for descending from My Father’s side, for entering your womb and being born the Savior, for Jesus continues, “*My hour has not yet come.*”

No, Jesus had just been baptized by John; this was the beginning of Jesus’ ministry; His hour would have to wait for a few years, for a triumphant entry, for a

Passover festival where lambs were led to the slaughter. For at the end of His earthly ministry as Jesus Himself was preparing to offer up His life as the Paschal sacrifice, Jesus said, “*The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.*” And again, “*for this purpose I have come to this hour*” (John 12:23, 27). That is, Jesus came to be “*lifted up from the earth*” (John 12:32). He came as a “*grain of wheat [falling] into the earth and [dying]*” (John 12:24). He came that this seed might sprout forth on the third day and “*[bear] much fruit,*” that as we look to the Son lifted up, taken down, raised up, and ascended on high, He might “*draw all people to [Himself]*” (John 12:32), us to Himself, the Bridegroom drawing His Bride unto Himself.

It was not His time yet, but still He had compassion on this bridal couple. It would not do to have a veil cast over this wedding feast. It would not do to have the bridal couple in tears over a lack of “*aged wine well refined*” (Is. 25:6-8), not if Jesus’ presence was to signal the coming of the eternal wedding feast of the Son.

And so, first to signal the cleansing water that gives us entrance to the feast, Jesus has the servants fill water jars, but not just any water jars—water jars used for “*Jewish rites of purification,*” that is, water used for washing. And then from this water, Jesus performing His first sign, He changes that water into wine, signaling also the church’s ongoing life in Him, in His blood, for this wine was the good stuff. And so do we partake of the good stuff as we who have been baptized, come to the foretaste of His eternal wedding feast. But we partake not simply of wine, nor simply of bread, but of the cup of blessing that is His blood and the bread broken that is His body, given and shed for you for the forgiveness of your sins, for your life and your salvation.

Jesus did this, the “*first of his signs, ... at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory,*” John tells us. With this sign, Jesus starts His disciples down the difficult path of understanding what His true purpose was and where His glory really might be found. “*His disciples believed in him,*” John says, but not fully understanding where following Jesus was going to take them.

Friends, Jesus still does signs today. He gives life through the purifying waters of baptism. He changes not water into wine, but joins blood to wine and body to bread. He does it still that His disciples, washed, cleansed, sanctified, might believe in Him, in Christ, the Lamb of God, who takest away the sin of the world, that we might partake and be strengthened in faith toward Him and in fervent love for one another. Today is the third day for us, too—every Sunday is. The sacrifice has been offered; the Lamb that was slain lives, and He offers Himself to us at this altar. Jesus is at the feast! Come! Eat and drink!

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.