

In Jesus' name. Amen.

*We read as follows in Jesus' name:*

This, the first of His signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested His glory. And His disciples believed in Him.<sup>(ESV)</sup>

*This is Your Word, heavenly Father; sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth. Amen.* (John 17:17)

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

At Christmas we learned about the sign given to the Shepherds,

that they would find **"a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger."**

For thousands of years, God had prophesied using signs performed by His prophets.

At the Epiphany, God used the star as a sign for the Magi.

But now Jesus, for the first time, would give a visible sign Himself, manifesting His glory, that is: showing that He is the Son of God.

First, let us examine the manner of this sign.

Marketing experts today will tell you that you need to start big; you need a flashy sign that will "pop." But we see just the opposite from our Savior, His first sign was discreet and humble.

He was not seeking attention to take it away from the wedding, nor was He showing off.

This is what the devil had tempted Him to do less than 2 weeks prior, changing stones to bread.

He was tempting Jesus to use His power for His own purposes:

to feed Himself and to "prove" to Himself and the devil that He was in fact God's Son.

When Satan told Jesus to jump off the temple, He was tempting Him to show off His glory,

suggesting that the angels would rescue Him, and the people would see and believe in Him.

But Jesus conquered in these temptations, He would not use His power for such selfish reasons.

The purpose of Jesus' signs is two-fold, in order to bestow a special blessing and to manifest His glory, showing Himself to be the Son of God.

In our text, we see that the Father had provided His Son with such an opportunity to manifest Himself as the wine ran out.

Such a lack of wine would have been rather embarrassing.

Perhaps the guests would have seen this as a lack of the husband's ability to provide for his new family.

Or maybe they would have blamed the wife for her careless planning.

After all, who invites guests to a party without arranging for the basic necessities to celebrate?

But here is how God provided the right circumstance and reason for Jesus to manifest His glory.

Jesus blessed this new family even without them knowing it.

Though they were running out of what they considered the good wine,

Jesus gave them an ample supply of an even better vintage.

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As we look at our families, we don't have to look far for the right circumstances for Jesus to manifest His glory in them - as He comes to relieve our needs.

We all have dysfunctions in our families, how can we not? Our families are full of sinners.

You struggle against the sin in yourself, as well as the sins of your family members.

You feel guilty for your neglect, or abuses, or your indifferences, or thoughtlessness, or rudeness...  
You feel ashamed by the sins that others have perpetrated against you,  
and you hate the feelings and scars that those sins have left you with.  
Even now, you are not the mother or father, or son or daughter, or sister or brother,  
or aunt or uncle, or grandparent, or cousin, or spouse that you ought to be... that you want to be.

The struggle depletes you. It drains you of the wine of gladness,  
till your family life seems to have more bitterness than joy, more drudgery than willing service.  
This is a sign that you are running out of wine—if you will,  
and embarrassment may be the least of your worries.  
Your co-workers, clients, and boss, they get your best attitudes, the smile plastered on your face.  
You put on a show for them, trying to keep up the act so that Facebook sees constant smiles.  
But with your family, instead of the wine of love, joy, and peace at all times,  
we serve our family members the inferior wine, we serve them indifference, grief, envy, and malice.  
Our words are not seasoned with forgiveness or evangelical love and compassion,  
but we pepper them with sharp retorts and bitter grudges.

What happens is our eyes get dulled by the intoxication of the inferior wine of worldly concerns,  
of selfish concerns, and as they do, we fail to see that we are losing sight of Jesus.  
We don't look for His signs anymore. We grow disinterested in keeping our eyes on Him,  
to see how He blesses us with His presence.  
Even Christian marriages and families fall into this,  
until they are not Christian marriages or families anymore, but just marriages and families...  
and sometimes, even the marriages break up and the families fall apart.

When Eve took her eyes off of Adam, the devil tempted her into looking for her own glory.  
She initiated the first step toward a dysfunctional family.  
Adam quickly followed her lead, and no family has functioned properly ever since.  
Who would have ever thought that any good could come out of this?

But even in our dysfunction, God is still able to provide the right time, the right circumstance,  
and the right reason for Jesus to manifest His glory in our lives.  
Even before we perceived our wine running completely out,  
or we recognize the inferior attitudes with which we afflict our own families,  
He had already performed the miracle of your salvation and would distribute His bounteous grace.

In blessing this newly wed couple, Jesus **manifested His glory,**  
**the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.** (John 1:14)  
Being full of grace and truth, He lived a life of love, joy, and peace, and shared it with others,  
including and especially, His earthly family.  
He freely gave of Himself to help His mother and the newly weds,  
and in so doing, He honored God's gift of family for you.  
He honored His Father and obeyed Him, even to the point of His own death.  
He freely drank of the cup of God's wrath to the dregs, filled with your envy, discord, and anger.  
because it was His Father's will and because He Himself loves you.

He didn't do it to flaunt His glory and power in front of you,  
to make you feel embarrassed or even more guilty.  
He did this to bless you and to give you the best He has to offer:  
the forgiveness of your sins, eternal life, and salvation.  
He did it so that your family may find its relief and delight in Christ's forgiveness,  
that spreads and is shared freely among those who have freely drunk it in.

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Even though everyone at the wedding drank the wine that Jesus had provided,  
not everyone knew where it had come from; only a few people knew what Jesus had done.  
To those who did not know, it seemed only natural that there was sufficient wine.  
... The world receives many of the blessings God bestows on marriage like stability and security.  
It also receives certain blessings from the Church, like our prayers and intercessions.  
And to them, it seems only natural that a marriage would have such things.

But unfortunately they do not recognize the grace and supernatural gifts given through marriage,  
nor do they receive its full benefit since they do not see how Holy Matrimony  
is a reflection of Christ's relationship to us...

how He unites Himself with you to become one with you to give you eternal stability,  
spiritual certainty, and peace and unity with God;

how He washes you clean from all your sins to **present you to Himself in splendor,** Ephesians 5:27  
**without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that you might be holy and without blemish.**

But you are not the world. You are a disciple of Jesus. You have seen the signs.  
You have been in His presence and seen how He refills you week after week  
so that your wine of gladness need not run out or get down to the dregs.  
So we see how important Jesus' presence is in our marriages, in our families.  
Without Him, you may have some good times here and there,  
but who is there to supply the forgiveness you need when sin depletes your joy?

We want to return to Him, where we are shown our Baptism once again,  
to see in the water of Holy Baptism the blood of Jesus that **cleanses us from all sin.** (1 John 1:7)  
We want to be present for the Holy Communion, and receive the best vintage ever de-vined,  
knowing that the blood of Jesus is there given and shed for you for the remission of all of your sins.

Our family's life in Christ may not be what the world would look for in the flashiest signs  
that would display God's glory.  
But it is in our families that God often provides for Himself the right time, circumstance,  
and reason for Jesus to manifest His glory... to bless and forgive you and your family.  
Our marriages and families help to keep us humble, recognizing our constant need for forgiveness,  
constant need for a Savior... our constant need for Jesus.

The Lord grant that He keep your eyes on Christ, looking for His signs,  
and driving you to them so that you may live in His grace and truth all your days.  
*Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost,*  
*as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, forevermore. Amen.*

*Soli Deo Gloria*