

THE LIGHT OF LIFE, THE LIFE OF THE PARTY

John 2.1-11

Today, I want to talk about being or becoming
a devoted follower of Jesus Christ who wants to serve him willingly and well.”

It’s the logical step in our sermon series from the Gospel of John.
Pastor Eldon has talked about Jesus coming, Jesus being baptized,
and then last week about Jesus calling his disciples.

So this week, it is fair to ask-how do we grow as disciples of Jesus Christ?
How do we grow in this relationship with Jesus?
How do we grow in faith?

You can be sure that we’ll get some help-some good help.

Paul promises us that God will help us.
In Philippians 1.6, he says,
“That he who began a good work in us will bring it to completion in Christ Jesus.”

But some of us still struggle with that.
I, even as a pastor, question whether or not I’ve grown enough as a person of faith.
I think the disciples wondered about that as well.

One of the things Jesus used to help the disciples grow in faith was a miracle.
He turned water into wine.

In ancient times wine was a symbol for joy.
So, today, I want to use joy or should I say the lack of joy
as a synonym for faith to illustrate the depth of our spiritual poverty
and our need for Jesus.

There are so many things stunting our growth and stealing our joy.
Indulge me a moment as I present these contemporary symbols.

Here is a bottle of Joy, Joy Dish Washer Detergent.
It symbolizes our self-serving schedules.

The bottle is pretty much empty.
There is not much Joy left.

I can be like that bottle and maybe some of you are too.
We’re busy, busy, busssy people.
We’re here and there, and everywhere.

We’re serving...but maybe not serving so wise or so well.
We’re running fast, and running on low, and, running out.
We have self-serving schedules.

We also have self-centered priorities.
 Here is a controller to a play station.
 It is the contemporary joystick.
 I remember the days I tried to play Donkey Kong with my kids.
 I was out in less than 15 seconds.
 They lasted over 15 minutes.

Anyway, you take away the joystick
 and someone's joy will be taken away too.
 Poof...joy will vanish-believe me.

But as I think of my life I just shake my head
 at some of the playthings I have invested time, money, and effort in.

You think I would choose better,
 so that it would be more difficult to "steal my joy."

I not only have a self-serving schedule and self-centered priorities
 There are times I have a shallow appreciation for what I have.

How many of you of like Almond Joy candy bars?
 Well, today I have just an almond with me.

Almonds are good for us, you know?
 But things that are good for us...opps me, aren't always GOOD ENOUGH for me.

I want the dellllliciousssss dark chocolate on the outside
 and the chewy coconut on the inside-yummmm,
 with the almond of course.

It's hard to get excited about just a nut.
I expect and want more than a nut.

My shallow appreciation brings about dissatisfaction,
 and dissatisfaction drives joy away.

Also my senile memory makes for less joy.
 I have something else with me that you can't see.
 It's Char's love for me.

The name Char come from the Greek word, *charis*.
 Guess what *charis* means?
 It is a word for joy.

One of the reasons God put Char in my life
 was to make sure I would remember my life is full of joy.

But you know what?
 I don't always REMEMBER that I have all that joy,
 and I don't always FEEL all that joy,
 even though it is always there.

You know some days it seems we're full of joy, full of good stuff.

And then other days it seems we're only full of anger or anxiety,
disappointment or doubt, exhaustion or emptiness,
fear or forget fullness, and guilt or grief.

So our joy gets stolen, confidence corroded,
hope hammered, and faith wilted.

If that is the case, I have some Good News for you,
we can trade down that stuff.
Yep, we can trade down that stuff.

Our hope can be restored,
our joy can be replenish,
and our faith can be revived
as our lives become filled with the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

That is not just because I say so.
It is because Jesus, the co-creator of the universe,
the co-creator of you and I, the author and perfecter of our faith
the Lord of Lord and the King of Kings,
the first and the last, the beginning and the end,
the great I AM, the Light of the World,
and the Lamb that takes away the sins of the World, says so,
*"I have told you these things for a purpose:
that my joy might be your joy,
and your joy wholly mature (complete). John 15.11*

Ok, so you're still struggling...don't give up...just, keep seeking.

Lets see what more we can learn from our passage today.
Let's go to the wedding party
and find out more about this miracle,
more about being filled with joy,
and more about being a more devoted follower of Jesus Christ.

A party is just what we need.
A wedding party is just the thing, the **RIGHT THING**
because it's at **THE RIGHT TIME**,
with **THE RIGHT PEOPLE**,
offering God **THE RIGHT RESPONSE**
and God promises **THE RIGHT RESULTS**.

First, the **RIGHT TIME**.
Chapter 2.1, *"On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee."*

It's a wedding and these folks celebrated all week.
In the first verse we're given a clue
something is really going to happen besides the celebration.

Note the **third day**.

Whenever we as people of faith hear-the third day,
we can think not only is something good going to happen-
but something GREAT.

It was on the third day during creation that the earth emerged from a watery tomb.
In the book of Hosea we're told that on the third day,
God would restore the nation of Israel.

Jonah was delivered from the belly of a whale the third day.
And most significant to us, Jesus was raised from the dead on the third day.

Could this be the "third day" for you?

Is there trouble at home...your marriage, with your kids, because of your finances?

Is there trouble at work...someone you work with, the job, the boss or boredom?

Are you just bumed out at school? Too much homework, trouble with another student, or teacher?

This time is the RIGHT TIME, the Lord's time
for us to get turned around and our troubles to get traded down.

Another thing we learn at this party is that,
it is important to have THE RIGHT PEOPLE.

John 2.1b and following,

*"Jesus mother was there
and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding."*

How many of you have ever planned a wedding?
How many of you don't care if you ever plan a wedding?

You have about gizillion things to do.
You have to plan for the service itself;
set up rehearsals and receptions,
get the invitations out and the cake baked,
get programs printed and pictures taken,
make sure you have the decorations, dresses and tuxes;
set time for hair and nails to be done (well at least for the girls),
and make sure you have the flowers and plenty of food.

Definitely don't forget the food...and drink.
You might want some help getting that all done.
You might want someone like a wedding planner.

Well, Mother Mary is at the wedding and
she'sss is kinda like a wedding planner.
She was keeping watch over everything.
She's the trouble shooter and she sees trouble,
they have run out of wine.

Verse 3, *"When the wine was gone,
Jesus mother said to him, they have no more wine."*

That is not good that they have run out of wine.

**Have you ever invited some people over for dinner
and you ran out of food or the meal got pretty skimpy?**

**What if That's A Pizza ran out of Pizza,
McDonalds ran out of hamburgers,
or Dairy Queen runs out of Dilly Bars.**

**Or heaven forbid we run out of donuts and coffee at fellowship time.
That would be embarrassing plus.**

**Well, in ancient times you couldn't just shrug your shoulders
and say that doesn't matter.
This would have been very humiliating
and brought an untold amount of disgrace and shame on the family.**

**It is good Mary tells Jesus.
It is good she intercedes for the people,
She confesses the need and seeks a solution.
She isn't afraid to admit to Jesus that something is wrong.**

**In life you and I need people in our life that love us,
support us, care and challenge us, help us plan,
and just as important, intercede and pray for us.**

**We need the right models to set a good example for us.
If they have a concern, they take it to Jesus.
If they make a mistake, they take it to Jesus, too.**

**Who are the people in your life that mentor and model for you,
that plan, provide, and pray for you?**

**Mary is the right person to have at the party
Jesus is the right person to have at the party.**

**It is a good thing Jesus is on the guest list.
He performs a miracle.
He turns the water to wine and
helps the family save face and fills the disciples with faith.**

**If we compared our life to a party...
who or what would be on your guest list?**

**A lot of folks have put things on the guest list of their lives,
such things as alcohol and drugs,
possessions and pornography, work and worry.**

**These things are welcomed with open arms.
But not only do they come to the party but they like to stay.**

They take up residence in one's life,
 establish control over the household,
 and destroy life and relationships.

Is Jesus on your guest list?
 He wants to work a miracle for you and in you?

In John 10.10, *“Jesus says he will come to give you a real life and an eternal life.”*

Hebrews 12.2 tells us,
“He endured the suffering and shame for the joy to be found”

You've heard the clique, Jesus loves you just as you are
 and Jesus loves you too much to leave you just as you are.

I John 1.9 promises us,
*“If we confess our sin, he is a just and righteous God
 and will not only forgive us but cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*

It is good to have Jesus on your guest list of life.
 And it is good to let him become the life of the party.

In our story today, Mary is confident Jesus will do something
 so she just says to the servants in verse 5, *“do whatever he tells you.”*

Which leads us to our third point, **THE RIGHT RESPONSE**,
 Listen in, verses 6-9,
*“Nearby stood six stone water jars,
 the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing,
 each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.*

*Jesus said to the servants, “Fill the jars with water;”
 so they filled them to the brim.”*
*Then Jesus said, “Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet.
THEY DID SO”*

We see and hear that the servants did what they were asked to do.
 And walla-water is turned into wine.

It is like trust and obey, there is no other way,
 to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.

A right response is to take advantage of opportunities to grow in faith,
 Opportunities to serve, to pray, and to study are opportunities to grow in faith.

We have teachers and helpers that we honor today.
 Think of the many miracles God is going to work in their lives
 and the lives of your children they teach all because they said yes
 to the invitation to teach.

We have these little prayer books,
“If My People—a 40 Day Prayer Guide For Our Nation.”
 on the back table.

We invite you to pick one up
 and start praying for our nation until the election.

These prayers do not promote one political candidate or the other,
 favor one political party over another, or take on any side of any issue.

They are heartfelt prayers inviting God to move in our personal lives and
 in the corporate life of this country.

We know that real change for ourselves and our nation are only going to come about
 as a result of repentance and because of the power of prayer.

Find the list of Sunday School Bible Study Classes.
 It is wonderful that this church has so many adults
 in Bible Studies and Sunday School Classes.

We’re going to add another class or two in October.
 One will be on how to read the Bible.

Well with the **RIGHT RESPONSE**
 will come **THE RIGHT RESULTS.**

The master of the banquet tastes the wine
 and then he makes this speech,
 Verse 10, *“Everyone brings out the choice wine first
 and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink;
 but you have save the best till now.”*

The family is saved from embarrassment and shame
 and in fact receives a very high compliment.

That is one result of Jesus first miracle.
 Others we find in verse 11,
*“He thus revealed his glory,
 and his disciples put their faith in him.”*

Just give God the opportunity to work a miracle
 for you and in you today.
 God will use our service, prayers, and study to help us grow in faith,
 fill us with joy, and make peace permanent resident in our lives.

Let us pray.

