

SERMON FOR SUN. JANUARY 16, 2022

Epiphany 2C 2022 John 2:1-11

Dear fellow redeemed of, by and for Christ, today's Gospel seems a bit out of place in a world where violence and tragedy seem to be unending - *Jesus at a wedding*. Contrast such a joyous event with the sad state of affairs in these latter days:

The tragedy of abortion, 43 million lives snuffed out worldwide via abortion last year

The tragedy of a pandemic that killed 5,000,000 last year.

The tragedy of babies uncared for after they are born.

The tragedy of people needlessly dying at the hands of corrupt governments.

The tragedy of workplace murders and domestic violence.

The tragedy of euthanasia, or what some folks like to call "mercy killing."

The tragedies that happen in people's lives every day, like cancer, Alzheimer's, or other debilitating diseases. Indeed, the sad consequences of sin are never in short supply.

While today is the 2nd Sunday of Epiphany it is also Sanctity of Life Sunday - the day that we especially remember that even amid all this sin, tragedy and death - God considered every human life to be worth the life of God's Son.

Every human life, no matter who they are - the unborn, the weak, the underprivileged, the disabled, the unwanted, the aged, the sick, the poor - we recall that our Lord cares even for those folks that nobody else may care about.

Every human life is important to Him because every human life is a unique, unrepeatable miracle of His creation. Therefore, every human life is a life for which He joyously and willingly traded His own life so that we might live.

That is a wondrous truth which we do well to consider.

There is a danger in that, however - that Christians would ignore our neighbors suffering, thinking that since God loves those folks, He will take care of them.

While that is true, He calls on us to show compassion and love as we can with the gifts the Lord has given us.

You have opportunities to help your neighbor face perhaps smaller, but no less serious, tragedies.

And, you can pray. Do not underestimate the importance of your prayers! James tells us that ***the fervent prayers of the righteous, have great power.***

As baptized children of your Heavenly Father, you have the high honor of lifting up others before the throne of God Almighty.

And what you are unable to do, your Savior can. **PAUSE**

In our text, Mary noticed her neighbor's need at a wedding in Cana. It was ***such a small need*** - they ran out of wine!

While running out of wine to serve wedding guests seems like a minor problem compared to some, it was a major faux pas in that society.

But Mary saw a need, and she went to the One who could help. And our Lord heard, and saw, and helped.

Will He not also hear and see us and our neighbors needs and help now? Indeed, He will.

That is why He is at Cana at all. Jesus is God in the flesh, come to deal with the tragic consequences of sin.

So why, then, many want to know - why does God allow these tragedies to happen? Why does He not stop them?

It's not a new question. It was asked after 9-11, after the tsunami, after every hurricane, every time an area floods.

It's asked often in hospitals and nursing homes, gravesides and memorials.

It's a question that, in itself, is an *accusation* - that God has done wrong. That His actions need to be justified and explained.

The Creator is put on trial by His creatures with such a question. And we demand answers. Imagine that! We demand answers from God!

God doesn't have to answer us! But He did. Not by telling us all the answers to all the questions we have - we probably would not be satisfied with His answers anyway!

No, He answered that night in Bethlehem, by becoming one with us in our suffering. He didn't remain aloof and separate from us in the tragedy of our sin, but became one with us in it.

But honestly, we don't like that answer, do we? We don't want God to come to us ***in our suffering***. ***No, we want Him to take us out of our suffering!***

But God deals with the effects of sin in His way, not our way. And so today, not one victim of tragedy is feeling pain, or heartache, sorrow, or a grief, that He does not feel.

Those very human emotions caused Him to cry out from the cross, **My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?**

Jesus was forsaken because the time on the cross was ***His hour, the hour he told his mother had not yet come when they attended that wedding in Cana.***

The cross was how God chose to make right a world that Adam's fall had wrenched out of whack through sin.

Jesus made things right not with us, but with his Father; not by abolishing sin, but by atoning for it, forgiving it.

And so He comes and joins us, He suffers and dies, so that we are forgiven, redeemed, reconciled and saved.

You see, Good Friday was Jesus' wedding day, for that day, after leaving His Father and then His mother, Jesus joyously clung fast to His Bride, to you.

Clinging to you on the cross. Clinging to you and your sin, your suffering, your brokenness, your shame - making it all His, becoming one flesh with you and all you are, to make you His.

That after the suffering, pain and death, after the tragedy of sin is dealt with, **on the third day** there'd be joy. **PAUSE**

As at Cana, God saved the best for last.

At Cana, the master of the feast wondered at this. At the time, everyone served the best wine first and once folks were in their cups, they wouldn't care about the quality of the wine.

In effect, we want God to do the same for us. We want to escape the suffering of this world, now. We'd rather leave now, die now, before what I see on T.V. catches up to us.

But that is not our Lord's way. Instead, He says, **I am with you. Always.** He does not take us out of the trials and troubles of this world and life but comes into them with us, for us.

And today, He comes to you, for you, in His body and blood, in His Supper, with His promise of life.

That the sin of the world and the tragedies of life not overcome you, for His forgiveness, life, and yes, *victory* are yours. Yours as you eat His body and drink His blood.

So let's be clear: suffering is not a sign that God is not with you, any more than success/wealth are signs that He is.

No! As we live in this world, we walk by faith, not sight. Faith is His promise that He sees, He knows, He cares, and that He is here, working and saving.

Now, does it look that way as you view the evening news? But what we see is not all there is.

And the cross shows us that God is with us in our suffering in ways that we do not know and cannot see.

But faith believes that He is here, just as He is in war torn countries, in hospitals, abortion clinics, nursing homes, and yes, in your home.

And so now, we live by faith in two ways. **First**, like Mary, we offer up our prayers and petitions for those in need.

Lord, they have no food; Lord, my neighbor is in trouble.

And we help as we are able - prayer is not an excuse to inaction, but a recognition of our limitedness, that only He whose love is perfect and whose ways are good can truly help.

But perhaps He will use us in some small way to do so.

And **second**, we repent. Because repentance takes us outside of ourselves, outside our self-pity.

In repentance, we cling not to our sin and suffering, or to our wisdom and understanding, *repentance looks and clings to the cross.*

To let God be God, and our Savior be our Savior in His way, not in ours.

And in the cross, we see the sanctity of our life, and the life of every person, and we know the love of our Savior.

And then receiving His forgiveness and love, we live and give the same to others. Joining them in their suffering.

And looking forward to the day when we drink the new wine of the kingdom of heaven, in the wedding feast that has no end.

That day at Cana, we are told, **Jesus manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him.**

And today, as our Lord manifests His glory by changing bread and wine into His body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins, for our life and salvation, may the same be said of us: that in all that we do and say and in how we live – that **they believe in Him. AMEN**