

## The Hour & the Honour

*When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come." John 2:3-4*

Youthful zeal is a wonderful thing to behold. The young Christian couple can't help wonder "Why can't we be married already". The military recruit full of the knowledge of the mechanics of his rifle, machine gun, and grenade says "Let me get at it already". The seminarian, even if he's a 40 year old second career man, is saying "I've trained enough let me preach already". Yes, zeal is a wonderful thing to behold but when it's unbalanced with reality it makes the more experienced shudder. The couple married 20 years, the sergeant having seen a recruit last 30 seconds in battle, or the veteran pastor, they shudder. They shudder because they know that a marriage is more than a wedding; soldiering is more than glory in dress uniforms on a parade square. Preaching is more than rhetoric and glory. In every calling, the glory is tempered by the cross. So it is with the Messiah attending the wedding in the village of Cana. He is to rise to great manifestations of Glory as in this epiphany season of light, miracles, and transfigured glory but he also goes down to the depths of servanthood. We who would follow in his steps must be prepared for a passionate life of similar extremes.

So our Lord shows he is prepared for a life lived in extremes, although a young man, for a Rabbi, by Jewish standards. That is, you couldn't be a rabbi until you were thirty. Jesus is an old soul. He knows that his miracles manifesting his divinity won't end in glory and remain. He knows that his miracles fuel the fury of Satan, arouse the anger of a sinful world, and challenge his own weak flesh. He stands before his mother's request "They have no more wine" knowing the need and opportunity for the creation of faith in the hearts of his disciples, but also knowing the consequences. He's an old soul. Actually his origins are from all eternity. In a setting of greatest joy, he sees the shadow of the cross. In his flesh, he would desire to delay. He knows the meaning of the hour and understands how his hour is upon him.

"Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me"?  
My hour has not yet come.

Everything has now changed and he knows it. He knows it even as he hesitates in it. He calls his mother woman. The relationship has changed. In calling Mary woman we are immediately drawn to Genesis chapter 3 and the primordial conflict in Eden. Eve is the woman who falls. Here, Mary is a New Eve, a new woman who becomes God's instrument, albeit an imperfect instrument, to urge the Messiah to embrace his hour.

Oh that more mothers would encourage their sons to man up and embrace their hour. Embrace their mission. Leave the nest. Pursue their calling. Mary beckons Jesus to embrace the hour even though she knew from the moment of his birth he was to die as Simeon spoke the prophecy about the sword piercing her own soul and the wisemen came bearing the burial spice of myrrh. But perhaps Mary is sustained with the third day. There is the third day of resurrection. But first there is the hour.

Whenever the phrase “the hour” is used in the New Testament it is used in relation to Our Lord’s Passion, death, and glory. References to this hour are made seven times in John alone, some of which are noted here.

Then Jesus replied: The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. (John 12:23)

Now my soul is in turmoil, and what am I to say? Father, save me from this hour. No, it was for this that I came to this hour. (John 12:27)

Look, the hour is coming, has indeed already come, when you are all to be scattered, each to his home, leaving me alone. Yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. (John 16:32)

Jesus in his humanity would wrestle with the coming of his hour, not just here at the beginning of his mission and ministry but also toward the end. “Father, take this cup from me”. After each moment of hesitation, we see the temptation he faces. We see the fullness of his humanity. We see the suffering he has for us as he wrestles with the temptation. Run. Run from the mission. Sinless Son of Man you need not fight this fight. But he resists the temptation. He embraces his hour. At the beginning of his mission he acknowledges the presence of the hour and says “Fill the jars with water” and proceeds to turn the water into wine. At the end when he institutes his Holy Supper he takes the wine and says let it be my blood. This is the blood of the New Testament given and shed for you, for the forgiveness of sins.

He sets his face towards Jerusalem. He will not flinch. They leave the table, singing psalms as they cross the Kidron Valley to Gethsemane. Then he says to his disciples in the garden “Behold, the hour is at hand...” He embraces his hour. He lives passionately holding the glory and the cross.

What we see in that moment at the wedding in Cana in Galilee is the divine knowledge of the cross even as he manifests his glory -- epiphany. It is a life lived in the extremes. Behold the glory but the glory will not go unchallenged.

Our Lord knows his mission. He knows what must be done. He embraces life in its times of heightened joy. He joins in the psalmists singing of joy. He would have been at the wedding saying “Let your joy be evident to all”. He drank wine which as the psalmist says “gladdens the heart of man”. He looks forward to the marriage Supper of the Lamb. His life isn’t all about suffering, but suffering for the sake of the Kingdom, that we can and will one day put suffering behind us entirely and life in the beatific vision and Light of an Eternal Kingdom. But it is a beatific vision which comes only with the cross.

The glory and the cross are always side by side in the life of the Christ. Are the glory and the cross side by side in our lives? Are we prepared to live as passionately?

There is no greater example than marriage. There are the heights of Joy but also the reality of sacrifice. Is the young couple in your life prepared for both, to live them simultaneously

as necessary? The vows themselves are illustrations of life in extreme. “For richer, for poorer in sickness and in health. Our Lutheran liturgy has it so right. We don’t say for richer or poorer in sickness or in health as if you might luck out and just get prosperity and heaven. It’s realistic. You’re going to be married in times of wealth, poverty, sickness and health sometimes with it all happening simultaneously in the same day. Are we prepared to live the passionate life with the glory and the cross so often side by side? Jesus was performing the miracle of Cana ready to drink the wine that makes the heart of man glad but also readying to embrace his hour. Are we as so prepared?

Whatever your calling, to the military, to marriage, to the ministry, whatever, expect the cross and crown side by side. We are about to witness such a reality of the vow this morning. Those who embrace the life of laity don’t get off with a reduced Christian life of the extremes. The equally share in the glory but also the share in the cross.

In a moment LuLu and her son Alvin are going to profess their Christian faith. It’s a time of glory. It’s a time of rejoicing. It’s a time of assurance that as they confess the name of Jesus before men we have the assurance that our Lord will confess their name before our heavenly father. It’s a time when we rejoice in the blessings of baptism which include forgiveness of sins, deliverance from eternal death and the devil as well as entrance into eternal life. But with some serious questions we must also ask about the cross. “Do you intend to continue steadfast in this confession and Church and to suffer all, even death, rather than fall away from it? The Christian lay baptized life, and not just clergy, is to be a life lived to extremes. Taken to eternal glory but by necessity taken through baptisms of fire, trial and tribulation.

But who can bear to mimic such a life? Why not flee? To all this we say I will stand steadfast. “Yes, by the grace of God”. Yes, by the power of the Christ. We jettison all that Oprah stuff about the power from within and start talking about the help from without. We speak of the power of God’s Holy Word and Sacraments. Behold the power of the word this morning. What did Jesus do to make the water wine? He didn’t touch it at all. It is an illustration of creation in the miniature. By his word alone the miracle is wrought. By His Word alone is there power. The Sacraments are made powerful because Jesus says they are powerful. And we believe they are powerful for the evidence of the witnesses lie before us.

The disciples witnessed the miracle and “they believed on him”. They followed to see so much more. Likewise we follow this Epiphany Season. We see God in man, made manifest. May the results be similar for us. Let us believe on him and watch our lives be transformed into passionate lives of extremes – the Honour and the Hour.

Amen.