

# “Wine”

John 2:1-11

January 14, 2007 the Second Sunday after the Epiphany  
the Rev. Todd R. Goddard, pastor  
Zion West Walworth United Methodist Church

## John 2:1-11

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, ‘They have no wine.’ And Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.’ His mother said to the servants, ‘Do whatever he tells you.’ Now standing there were six stone water-jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, ‘Fill the jars with water.’ And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, ‘Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.’ So they took it. When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom and said to him, ‘Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now.’ Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

Prayer.

In a perfect world,  
wine would be pure and unblemished,  
and the consumption of wine  
would be harmless  
and wonderful in every way.

But just as there is vile, vinegar tasting wine,  
so too is humankind flawed and imperfect.  
For many of us  
the characteristic alcohol  
that is a part of wine's composition  
is as toxic as cancer,  
as poisonous as arsenic  
as addictive as heroin  
as deadly as grabbing hold of a subway's third  
rail.  
For all of us  
alcohol makes the brain go dumb

and impairs our judgment.

In God's perfect world  
why would one desire reality  
to be skewed?

This study of wine  
created with the divine intervention  
of our Savior this morning  
can not be interpreted  
in any way, shape, or form  
to be an endorsement for alcoholic consumption.  
It can not be a license for youth  
nor a pass for a parent  
to misuse alcohol.  
Likewise, if alcohol  
is always on your mind,  
please,  
please tell your doctor,  
for alcoholism's pathology

1/5

“Wine”

John 2:1-11

January 14, 2007 the Second Sunday after the Epiphany

© the Rev. Todd R. Goddard, pastor

[Zion West Walworth United Methodist Church](#)

will destroy family, career  
and the body itself  
if not taken seriously,  
if not dealt with the same priority  
as imminent, life threatening danger.

The consumption of wine  
takes us back  
to the dawn of time  
when God populated the earth  
and set us in a garden.  
Members of my former parish in Dresden,  
nestled snugly on Seneca's fair shore  
might translate "garden"  
as "vineyard"  
since the rolling Finger lakes hillsides  
are covered with the parallel rows  
of vine and trellis.

In ancient cultures  
located in hot climates  
where water was scarce  
or difficult to keep unpolluted,  
the fruit of the vine  
became God's natural means of hydration.  
The impurities of water would not  
be absorbed into the vine or grape.  
The alcohol of fermentation  
would slow or stop the growth  
of sickness inducing bacteria.  
Wine became for the family  
a gift from God  
centered on every table.

The table is a sacred place;  
where the fruit of the vine,  
the labor of the land,  
and God's merciful bounty  
produce food for one's nourishment.  
It is a place where family  
is knitted together

where friends are invited  
and where one can reach out  
to the stranger, the widowed, or the orphaned  
in the community.

The table becomes the symbol  
not only for nourishment  
but for creating and growing  
human relationships between  
family,  
others, and  
God.

Miracles are the bookends  
for the life and ministry of Jesus  
in the Gospel of John.  
In the final paragraphs  
are written the narrative  
of the resurrected Jesus calling out to his  
former disciples who had returned to their  
fishing boats  
to cast their nets to the other side of the boat.  
A hundred and fifty-three fish  
weighed down their nets so full  
they had to drag them to shore.  
The miracle includes the invitation  
"come and have breakfast" (John 21:12)  
three commands  
"feed my lambs, tend my sheep, and feed my  
sheep" (John 21:15-17)  
and one final request  
"follow me." (John 21:19)

Like its mirror reflection  
the other bookend to John  
is our narrative of Jesus  
first using the tool known as "miracle"  
to change water into wine.  
The purpose of miracle  
always  
is to draw attention  
to the deeper,

often unseen agenda,  
of our heavenly Father.  
The miracle of fishing and breakfast  
on Galilee's shore  
is one of stewardship,  
to feed and tend the faith community,  
and continued discipleship,  
to grow itself to every corner of the world.

So what is the deep, unseen agenda of water  
being turned into wine?

Wine is a symbol of joy  
in Jewish tradition,  
and is associated with the Kiddush  
- the sanctification prayer of Shabbat and other  
festivals, such as marriage.  
Marriage, called "Kiddush-in,"  
is the sanctification  
of a man and a woman  
to each other.  
Wine is used throughout  
the ceremony of marriage  
and is a spiritual blessing  
for guests to supply the wine  
for the bride and bridegroom  
on their wedding day  
to celebrate their divine union.  
(www.aish.com)

The fact that wine ran out  
is troubling.

Did the couple have  
no family  
or few friends?  
Had they been orphaned?  
Unpopular?  
Poor?

The fact that wine ran out

is troubling.

It troubled Mary  
the mother of Jesus  
enough to command her son  
to do something about it.  
Jesus responds  
rather crassly  
'Woman,  
what concern is that  
to you and to me?  
My hour has not yet come.'  
(John 2:4)

Something miraculous happened in the next  
moment,  
far more miraculous than the mere  
reconstitution  
or substitution  
of one liquid with another.  
Something far more miraculous happened  
within Jesus:  
***the cosmos were rocked  
by the movement of God.***

God put words  
into action.  
God didn't send his Son, Jesus,  
to earth  
only  
to forgive and to save  
humankind from slavery to sin  
and the unavoidable end of mortal life.  
***God sent us Jesus  
to change the world.***

Jesus reached out to a new bride and groom  
whose few guests couldn't even supply the  
expected wine,  
and replaces their poverty  
- social poverty

- financial poverty  
- even, possibly, their spiritual poverty  
with overwhelming abundance  
and quality,  
a sign and symbol  
of a loving and benevolent God.  
Jesus reaches out to the poor,  
the isolated,  
the lost members of every society,  
cultural group,  
and faith community;  
and draws them into God's chosen circle  
of overwhelming abundance  
and quality,  
love and benevolence.

The heavens were moved,  
never again to be the same,  
when Jesus responded by saying,  
**'Fill the jars with water.'** (John 2:7)

This message is so important  
to us here today.  
When we taste and see  
the fruit of the vine  
come alive  
through words or drink,  
we should be reminded  
and so inspired  
that just as Jesus reached out to the poor and  
disadvantaged,  
so too should we,  
with the very same  
love, abundance, and compassion.  
Wine should serve as  
a connection with the example  
of how Jesus lived his life,  
fully and completely  
weaving together  
his words and his deeds  
to recreate a broken world.

For the faithful  
wine is more than example;  
of how to pattern our lives  
after the example of Jesus.  
Wine becomes for us a symbol  
in that Upper Room  
the Thursday before he died,  
when Jesus gathered his disciples  
for a meal,  
shared a common cup  
of wine,  
and directed us,  
that whenever we gather,  
we should share the same cup,  
to do this

**"in remembrance of me."**

(Luke 22:19)

Wine becomes the symbol  
of all that unites us  
with each other  
and with our God above.

In Christian tradition  
wine becomes more than a connection with the  
of joy  
of our shared Judaic history.  
Wine is a call  
to follow the example of Christ's actions  
to reach out to the poor, the disadvantaged, and  
the lost.  
This is Christ's top priority  
here on earth  
and it should be ours, too.

Wine is also  
an invitation  
to gather at the same table;  
to join Jesus  
for breakfast on Galilee's shore  
or for dinner in Jerusalem's sacred Upper Room.

Wine,  
either the fermented  
or the un-fermented  
fruit of the vine,  
from Cana's sparse wedding hall  
to the common chalice  
shared by a league of God's select and chosen,  
serves as symbol  
of God's  
unending  
love and  
abundance  
for you and me.

Give thanks to God above  
for when the heavens were moved,  
neither heaven or earth  
would ever again to be the same,  
and Jesus responded  
by saying,  
'Fill the jars with water.' (John 2:7)  
Amen.