

WHERE IS THE WORLD IS GOD? ~ HE IS THERE – HELPING YOU!

Grace, mercy and peace are yours from your God and Savior who is here – perfectly helping you!

We are in the time of the Church Year known as Epiphany. Perhaps you've heard someone say, "I've had an epiphany!" The light has gone on; they realize and understand something; they see the solution. That's what Epiphany is about. The light is turned on, shining upon Jesus. We see him not just as the babe in a manger or that carpenter's son from Nazareth, he is truly God.

This works very well with the theme we are following during Epiphany: "Where in the World is God?" Each week, God is going to turn the light on – to show us exactly where he is. Last week, in the Scripture readings about Jesus' baptism, we saw the Holy Spirit shining the spot light on him. We heard the voice of the Father declaring, "This is my Son." God has opened our eyes to know that through our baptism, our sins have been washed away, and we are connected to Christ.

But what about now? What about today, especially since too often we aren't remembering our baptism? What about this past week? In talking with quite a number of you, you took to heart Pastor Kogler's encouragement to "Keep on Praying – Don't quit!" You've been praying, and perhaps now more earnestly too, but has help arrived? Has your prayer been answered? If not, then how quickly doesn't that temptation sneak back in for us to ask, "Where in the world is God?" The Holy Spirit doesn't let that question linger and ruminate long – for today we see yet again that our God is there – bringing us the exact help we need, no matter the situation.

I. With His Almighty Hands

Speaking of quite a situation, we see quite a real challenge in our Gospel lesson. Cana is a small town, only 10 miles Nazareth. As is pretty typical in small towns, when there's something big, like a wedding, everyone and their brother is invited. Our text says, *"¹On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, ²and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. Jesus has just returned from 40 days in the wilderness. On days 1 and 2, he calls Andrew, John, Peter and Nathanael to be his disciples. Now all of them are off to this wedding having received an invitation to this big event. Nathanael himself is from Cana.*

Understand a few things about weddings in those day: 1) they lasted a long time – usually a week; 2) the beverage of choice would have been wine – and judging from the amount that Jesus provides, we can safely estimate that over 100 people were there. And while we're not sure if Mary had some specific job such as being the beverage coordinator, she sees the potential disaster unfolding. This could be a lasting black mark and point of embarrassment for these newlyweds on their festive occasion.

Before things turned south, Mary turned to Jesus. She didn't have to wonder, "Where in the world is God?" She went to him in faith and in confidence. *³When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine."* For 30 years, Mary had been treasuring and pondering in her heart all the things said and prophesied about her son. She had taken to heart the words her 12-year-old son spoke to them in the temple. She knew Jesus was the almighty Son of God and he was to be about his Heavenly Father's business. She comes to him with a need know that all things were possible through God.

Jesus answered his mother, *⁴"Dear woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied, "My time has not yet come."* He is not being disrespectful in his reply, but reaffirming that their relationship has changed from a mother and her dutiful son, to now a dutiful Savior who is about to bring the very kind of help foretold about him for centuries. The time for him to bring about that specific help has not yet come, but it will in 3 years. In 3 short Jesus, Jesus will address a need far greater than running out of wine to drink. In 3 years, he will deal directly with the shame and embarrassment and disgrace that sin has brought to all mankind. In 3 years, his Almighty power will be on full display for all the world to see! In 3 short years he will forever answer the question of "Where is God?" He is there – hanging on the cross for the sins of the world; he is there dying in your place and mine; he is there bringing to you and me the exact and perfect kind of help we all so desperately need.

The time for Jesus' full glory and power to be on display had not yet come, but he is going to start pulling back the veil. Here in the small town of Cana of Galilee, Jesus starts to reveal his power so that more and more people, like his mother Mary, will put their faith and trust in him. You can see Mary's faith on display. She hears Jesus' words, *"Why do you involve me?"* and – not at all being offended or put off by them – simple continues in faith as she instructs to the servants, *"Do whatever he tells you."* She involves Jesus because she knows who he is. She entrusts the matter to Jesus and confidently leaves the matter in his hands.

That perhaps is one of the hardest things for us to do, isn't it – to entrust ourselves and the situations before us into the Lord's hands and leave them there? Too often we try to change the water into wine, or fix our problems, all by ourselves. We try this and that and things don't improve; we worry and fret and it's long before we start wondering where's God? On the flip side, God is mostly asking, "Where in the world is Steve? Why isn't he coming to me?"

Entrusting all things to Jesus means we do keep praying and coming to Jesus. We do keep trusting in his almighty power to bring about the answer that is in full accord with his will and in his time. That may mean we have to wait awhile... or even a long while. But one thing's for certain – in that time of waiting we still know where God is – right there, hearing our prayer and working out all things for our good. That's his promise to us.

This is exactly why we involve Jesus in all our matters, concerns and situations. Whether it's the cancer that comes back, the job that is getting more strenuous, the stress at home – we involve Jesus because he cares for us and he invites to us reach out, "Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver you and you will honor me."

Neat how we're right back where we were last week – keep on praying, keep on coming to Jesus, never quit – because he never quits on you – the proof of this is in the cross and the empty tomb!



II. With Human Hands that Trust Him

And while Jesus' time had not yet *fully* come, the time was right for him to deal with the matter at hand. And the manner in which he goes about tells us so much about what kind of Savior we have. He doesn't put on a big show of abracadabra magic. There's no drawn-out drum roll and fireworks. He even doesn't involve the groom or the master of the banquet in this matter. He handles it very humbly by using simple people and regular ordinary means. ⁶*Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.* ⁷*Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim.* ⁸*Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." They did so.*

Mary instructed these servants to do whatever Jesus tells them – and they did. Most likely they were not aware of the potential wine shortage, so following simple instructions would not have raised any red flags. And even if taking some to the master seemed a bit out of the ordinary – after all these jars weren't regularly used for drinking – they did so without question. ⁹*and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside ¹⁰and said, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now."* Oh, to be one of those servants; to be the hands that filled the jars to the brim; the feet that carried the sample to the master... and not realize what was happening - *until* it happened! What was the look on their faces when the master's eyes lit up?

What a perfect example of how our Almighty Savior brings about the very help that we need – spiritually, physically, emotionally. He uses us and others. He involves our weak and feeble hands. He graciously calls us to participate in His awesome and powerful work. A baptism... it's simple wet water, it's our hands pouring on the water, it's His Words working the miracle. In communion... it's simple bread and wine, it's us partaking and yet it's once again his almighty Word that brings us Jesus' own body and blood. It's an printed invitation on card to come to worship, carried by your hands and feet to your friend, and the Holy Spirit who works through the Word of God to bring about yet one more epiphany – one more set of eyes that are opened to see that church isn't a building with 4 walls, but a place to be fed and nourished by the very best God has to offer... that it's not something you do on Sundays, but a life-long way of living in the joy of being connect to Christ and awaiting that eternal wedding banquet and feast of heaven.

Our text concludes, ¹¹*This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed in Cana of Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.* Jesus doesn't ask us the do the miracles... he just calls us to do the simple, the ordinary, and so we do whatever he asks of us... offering to him our hands, our feet, our time, our talents, our skills and abilities, our prayers and offerings – entrusting ourselves to him – and leaving the results up to him. Here in Cana, many were blessed by this first miracle – but we're not told that many believed, only his disciples – and for all we know, there were only 5 at this point. But what Jesus accomplished in little Cana – and we all know how word travels in a small town – Jesus laid the ground work for many to hear the Word and in time, put their faith in him too.

Rejoice dear friends that God has revealed his glory and power to you, knowing that he is always there to help. Rejoice to know that God uses you and me, yes simple, ordinary, normal folks to be his hands and his feet and his voice – to work miracle after miracle as we spread the Almighty word of God, letting the light shine on Jesus so that many more may know exactly where God is and call upon him in faith. Amen.