

Pr. Franklin Wilson  
Luther Memorial Church  
Isaiah 62.1-5; Psalm 36.5-10  
1 Corinthians 12.1-11; St. John 2.1-11

**Second Sunday after Epiphany  
Jan. 17, 2010**

“You shall no more be termed forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate; but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her, and your land Married; for the Lord delights in you, and your land shall be married.”

“On the third day there was a wedding in Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding...when the wine gave out.”

Most of us have been to a wedding. Some of us will have attended more weddings than we can either remember or count. Of all the weddings we have attended, I'd bet that most are lost to memory—except for the reception, party, or dinner after. Of my four living brother's 5 weddings, I can remember almost nothing save the parties: Douglas and his wife, Lesley, were married at a Methodist Church in the West Hills of Portland and I was the best man. I remember nothing of the service; but the party afterwards was great, and I can still see our mother's parents dancing. It was Grandpa Livengood's 73<sup>rd</sup> birthday, and I was just 22. Timothy was married at a Synagogue in Santa Monica the first time, and at a Synagogue in Northwest Portland the second; both were wonderful parties, full of energetic line dances, Hebrew songs, and enough food to feed several armies. But of the services themselves, I remember only the stomping of a glass.

Bryan and Wendy were married at a lovely Episcopalian Church also in Northwest Portland, and the party afterward featured a champagne fountain, chocolate fondue, great music, and dancing. Mathew was married in the lowest key service of them all—in the Episcopalian church at St. Helens; the party following was held at the Columbia County Fairgrounds where we had shown cattle, pigs, and sheep as children. We danced the night away less than a mile from our childhood home looking towards the Columbia, Mt. St. Helens, and Washington across the River.

Of course, the key to any wedding is the invitation. Without that, you're an uncouth wedding crasher. I can only recall crashing one wedding, and that was at Grace Episcopal Cathedral in San Francisco. I was in the City for the annual meeting of a clinical review board, and Marcia was with me. Our hotel was on Nob Hill a few blocks from the Cathedral and, because our departing flight was scheduled for Sunday morning, we went to worship at Saturday Evensong. It was raining buckets that weekend (nine inches in three days!), and the short walk up the hill proved drenching. We entered the Cathedral like drowned rats, soaked, dripping, and wringing water from our clothes—only to be met by a men in tuxedos. It was a wedding. But, since the wedding was scheduled during the Evensong hour, the public could—if they were gauche enough—

remain. We were and did. We sat in the rear of the stylish congregation, rain water forming puddles beneath our chairs. The assembly was comprised of the City's wealthy, beautiful people: women in formal dresses and men in black tie; the Bishop presided and the Cathedral choir sang. We straggled last for the Holy Eucharist, trailing water, and drawing stares. Afterwards we made our way through the downpour to our hotel: only to see the bride and groom arrive in a sleek limo just as we walked in. The wedding dinner was at our hotel. We considered crashing it, but didn't, as we had another party to attend. Still, the temptation to crash a splendid wedding feast was almost irresistible. Yet, without an invitation, it could have been awkward, and we had already had enough of "awkward" dripping our way through the Nuptial Eucharist as guests of Christ, not of the couple themselves. We exchanged glances with them as they entered the hotel, and they seemed to recognize us as the drippy interlopers from their elite wedding. Looking at them, seeing their splendid attire and stylish ways, I wondered if they had understood our participation in the Eucharist as anything other than crashing their party. I wondered if they recognized Christ as the true bridegroom. We had stayed to receive Christ in the Supper to which he invites us in baptism—but I suspect they saw us as mere intruders, and themselves as the central figures in the event. In a way, of course they were; but only in relation to Christ, the Bridegroom.

That's more or less what's going on in John chapter 2, the wedding feast at Cana to which Jesus, his mother, and his disciples were invited. As with most weddings, John doesn't record any details of the rite itself, but only the stunning social blooper that occurred during the party: they ran out of wine!

Now, in our culture that might seem a small thing: just run over to Woodman's and pick up another case. No big deal. Maybe some crashers had got in and drunk too much. Or maybe the caterer misread the order. Or maybe someone stole a barrel before the party began. Or maybe (and here's the most humiliating thing) the bridegroom was just too impolite, too penurious, or too poor to buy enough wine for his guests. In that culture at that time, it was a requirement to serve wine at a wedding feast, and it was the bridegroom's responsibility to provide it. If he didn't supply enough or if the quality was poor, it was a clear sign that the bridegroom was an insensitive cad with little or no regard for his guests.

Of course, given human nature, this can't have been a unique occurrence; it may even have been that the bridegroom *wanted* to shame his in-laws and guests. He may have been an ingrate, a snob, *and* a tightwad—somebody who didn't care a fig about anyone but himself. Perhaps, away from the crowd, he had his own private stash in the marriage tent.

In any case, the story's *denouement* revolves around Jesus' reluctant role in bailing the ratty bridegroom out. Even though she's an outsider, Jesus' mother takes charge and tells the catering team to follow her son's instructions: "Do whatever he tells you." They do, and when the head caterer tasted the water now become wine, astonished at its quality, he called the bridegroom to give him credit: "Everyone serves the good

wine first, and then when people are drunk, out comes the inferior stuff. But *you* have saved the beautiful stuff till now.” The head caterer gives credit to the wrong guy. It’s Jesus who made the arrangements, provided an extravagance of wonderful wine, and lets someone else get the credit: *there’s the miracle*.

In other words, Christ himself is the true Bridegroom. He’s the one responsible for this party, and seeing that others get the credit he deserves. More than that, in his death and resurrection, Jesus Christ has made himself both host and food—he is the Master of the Feast, and the bread and wine. He is the Bride’s lover, and her food and drink; he is our Lover and our Food and Drink—his own body and blood is the best stuff, and they nourish us forever. This party lasts forever, and invitations are common as water, given away for free, and they never run out. Every banquet eventually runs dry, but this Feast is eternal. Come to the Supper—Eat Christ and drink him. Live forever.