Epiphany 2 John 2:1-11

In the Name of the Father and of the +Son and of the Holy Spirit;

Together we just prayed the Collect, "Almighty and everlasting God, who governs all things in heaven and on earth, mercifully hear the prayers of Your people and grant us Your peace thru all our days; thru Jesus Christ our Lord…." Do you believe that - That we are praying to God who *governs all things in heaven and earth*? -Everything. Of course, we can't know all the various and intricate ways He is governing. But the Bible consistently shows, and anyone can note from experience, that He governs some things one way, and others in others, and many things we don't expect, that don't fit our expectations. Like any earthly government, but over all of those, too, there are certain things God does *allow*; And He permits some particular things to be effected by us. But He tells us that *all things* either way are governed to His *glory*.

Do you believe this? Or do you daily operate believing everything in your purview is all up to you; that you can accomplish whatever you want if you just try hard enough, put your mind to it, and have all the right help and information? For things you think you need, or matters *you* assume need doing, do you think God is not aware of these or in control?

We just heard how our Lord Jesus' Mother had a concern she thought Jesus was unaware of, and indeed He may have been for a time, here in His state of what call His humiliation. -They ran out of wine here at this wedding. That was a huge crasher for weddings back then. It could have been the first domino to entirely knock down this marriage as it was getting off the ground. Did Jesus not know? Didn't He care? "Woman, what does this have to do with Me, My hour has not come…" From His first answer it certainly seemed He didn't.

Not only that, but He spoke rather coldly, disrespectfully to His own mother… who *did* care? - Indeed, it might have seemed be was breaking from His own law here - distancing Himself from the poor woman who *He* should be concerned to respect – honoring Father and Mother? If He's God in the flesh, the Messiah, who didn't come to abolish the Law, but to fulfill it, it might seem to us, certainly at first view, that He should get right to doing something about it.

Now, you and I today know how this story went, so we may see it a bit different and with less anxiety than in "real time" as it played out. But pretend you were an observer. And then picture also if you heard Mary say what she did after just hearing Jesus' harsh response. …But then, different than you expect, you hear Mary to the servants: "Do *whatever* He tells you!" That might have seemed a little strange too. -She was implying something *favorable* and trusting toward Jesus after *He* had rebuked her! …But what did Jesus do? -It seems Jesus only went to add more insult to injury. Here, when it's no time for games, and Mary is anxious, Jesus didn't tell the servants how to get *wine*; but to fill some jugs with *water*. -Shame on Him! Doesn't He who governs all things in heaven and on earth see the waste?! Besides that, He was going to make His charitable mother look bad.

We know how this ended, of course. And so does St. John… who wants us to know and learn from it. John wants us to learn *how* the Lord indeed governs and rules; And *how we* should do, act, and think with what He's given or hasn't given us… when it seems He *doesn't* know or care; And he wants us to know things we *should be concerned about* and have confidence in especially thru those times; and so pray accordingly.

Did Jesus care about that wedding couple and their marriage? Of course! Why else would He be there right at the very beginning of His public Ministry! So, do you think He also cares about *marriage* in general today? For *every* couple in particular? -You better believe it! It's all over the Bible, right from the beginning. -The man being alone in the Garden was the first thing said was *not good* even before the fall into sin, and then the Lord went right to specially filling that void, bringing woman to man, and then He blessed them. And the Lord made big decrees about marriage, not only for the Jews, but long before - for all who would be the fruit of our first parents who He wanted to multiply. Creation was ordered for it this way; and it for the tending of creation. So, Jesus very much cares about marriage, for couples, and even everyone, including in their household matters and families, for that matter.

Now, in His governance, does He let things fall apart, or get strained? -Yes, you can see that happening here, too. *But like most things, if they are only maintained by human wisdom, power, and urgency, many things will get overlooked and fall apart*… just like with whoever was responsible for the wine at Cana. Does God not care when such huge things like Marriage -like *your* marriage- is falling into disaster, and you are anxious, even desperate? Does He not hear urgent pleas, like Mary's *or ours*? ….He hears it; and indeed He knows the matter. But still, that in itself doesn't always prod Him to fix it immediately, certainly not in ways we might want or think He should. And He maybe even making for things to happen that seem *contrary*.

As urgent as Mary's first words here, they didn't move Jesus. In fact, they might have seemed like more wasted time and *dis*couragement toward getting some wine, resolving the issue. But her second words, "Do whatever he tells you!" -those indicate a great change in how *she* saw this situation." She was reminded of how this was really in God's hands, indeed in Jesus' hands. And with those words Jesus began to do His special work.

You see, in her first words she spoke to Jesus like He was her little-boy-but-now-grown, telling him to help with the wine problem. She wasn't thinking of Him being at this wedding as "Christ the Lord, the Son of God" as the Father's voice had recently proclaimed. It seemed at first she was seeing this situation without that in mind, and so approaching it by human wisdom and effort. ….But her second words, "Do whatever *He* tells you!" shows she *then* was aware that her Son was there not there not merely as the boy-from-the-family, but *as Christ the Lord*… who came to restore a fallen, deteriorating creation… ….doing it because of His *hour*, which He speaks of here. When she trusts in Him as *such*, seeing He's concerned to be here at this wedding *in light of that hour* of His destiny, though Mary didn't know yet how that *hour* would play out, she became no less confident again: "He'll be better-than-good - even gracious! Extravagant!" Even if He'd first have six huge 30-gallon jugs filled with *water* when they're

having a *wine* emergency? -All the more! …You see, He knew all along, and but was governing so it could be used for *His* most wonderful purposes – to the thrill and confidence of His people… who believe His *hour* -when the Son of God would die, truly secures all things. They were going to see their true help was not in human wisdom and effort, but from the Lord – Jesus alone.

So, what is this *hour* that Jesus was so concerned about here? Jesus' hour was *the hour* when He Himself was going to take responsibility for your sin and mine, where after accomplishing all that the law demanded, He'd hang on the cross and still trust the Father. …. where it seemed *the Father Himself* didn't care. That's *the hour* - the hour in which He was actually beginning to make *all things new*, though it looked like everything was falling apart. Just like filling jugs with water when they needed wine, so He'd die with our faithless disbelief on all on His back… and yet, oblivious to us at the time, He would be truly be fulfilling His great plan. When His own people had all their wisdom and effort failing, and when they were all overwhelmed, Jesus was accomplishing our salvation the most ironically wonderful of ways – dying. There, by His innocence, bearing our sin, He atoned for us, and won His Father's blessing. There, He won our greatest joy and delight, seeing His great plan to raise anew and restore what was fallen. There we saw His great mercy, and not only mercy, but great love and power.

*You see, God – i.e., Jesus - knows and governs all things. Everything. But He only changes it for the good of His people in light of His hour…* and often in ways we do not understand, and when we are helpless, though looking to Him, but knowing He by this be our only true help. He wants such delays and anxieties to strengthen our faith that looks to Him for the sake of His hour.

This also teaches us how to pray, different from how much of the rest of the world prays. We don't expect the Lord to answer our prayers just because we pray, or just because we think our situation is so urgent, desperate, and overwhelming? And don't expect Him to do what we want if we just whine to Him enough times? No.

Is it our role to take care of things ourselves "down here" because the Lord just *isn't aware* of certain matters, or too busy, or too unable? -No. …Should we be anxious to get done what needs to get done because "it's all up to us"? - No. …Is the most important matter in the universe to procure our own survival and success in this life, however I define that? No! … It's all about *Jesus' hour*. ….And on our end, it's about our trust in Him because of His hour. It's about *His* rightful honor, the honor of His fulfilment of the law and faithful laying down of his life to pay for our sin in love. This is where His love and mercy was shown to be greater than any curse of the fall, greater than our sins and evil, or means of the devil to destroy. His glory is that people come to faith in Him who did that for them despite their sin.

Now, that doesn't mean the Lord doesn't give us any responsibility, or that you should be lazy because your labors are futile. By no means! It was good that Mary was at that wedding. For normal people to be there, it was good for her to be concerned to help the wedding couple, to pray for them, and even just to be there to celebrate. For *normal* people it would have been

right for a woman's son to help friends, and to listen to parents. It normally would be the wedding servants' job to fill those jugs, even when the order might seem counterintuitive. It normally was ultimately the bridegroom's job to oversee that there was wine for his wedding. If they were going to be lazy and faithless, and not fulfilling their duties, I'm sure God would have let them rot faster in their own faithless laziness and let it deteriorate. If they were going not receive or use the good gifts and offices He wanted them to take up and work in while trusting in and *working with* Him, including in crunch-time when we might be tempted to rely on our own wisdom instead … things *would have been* neglected, and fallen apart, as always happens ultimately when trusting human efforts alone or foremost.

But instead, just like when Mary acted in faith, and like those wedding servants who faithfully followed the order to get water; and like that bridegroom who simply wanted to invite Jesus and His disciples, not knowing what he needed, but because they trusted in Him – Jesus made them all look better than they were.

That's often what God does with us. Many Christian parents, myself included, often wonder how their kids turned out "more faithful than what I deserve." It's not because I did something so worthily of myself; though I very well might be at fault for something bad. But it's because the Lord's blessing, and the blessing of my prayers in light of Jesus' *hour*. The work I do, by God's word according to my vocation as a father or husband, trusting in the Lord's goodness is what God will bless… even when my own reasoning would say it's better to spend my time trying to earn more money, or trying to be as smart or powerful as I can, rather than more *faithful* in my duties, and faithful in commending all things into Jesus' hands.

Marriage and family relationships are largely a wreck in our country today. We have all things being called a "family" that are not; and "marriages" which simply aren't marriages, what God does not bless but despises. Accordingly, men don't know their role, and women don't know theirs as the Lord designed, and children are forsaken. Many avoid marriage in fear, perhaps rightly so, but they often end up suffering in loneliness instead. Secular paths of healing for couples being offered only rely on human wisdom… and still can't help, not long term. But the Lord promises to bless the marriage of those who will trust in Him.

The Lord wants to bless marriage and He wants babies to be born, and will bless both temporally and eternally… albeit it will be thru trials. But those who trust in Him for the sake of His Son will realize it is much better this way.

Jesus as the heavenly bridegroom laid down His life for the Church, taking responsibility for all of us. And He will bless those who trust in Him, including men who do like Him, and women who do like Mary, commending themselves to Him in light of His hour. Amen.

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