

2013 Life Sunday Sermon

Second Sunday after the Epiphany

Theme: Man of the Hour

Text: John 2:1-11

Rev. Dr. James I. Lamb, Executive Director, Lutherans For Life

Imagine a first-century “Master of Ceremonies” announcing to a crowd gathered in front of him, “I give you the man of the hour, Jesus of Nazareth.” As people raise their hands to applaud, they follow the wave of his arm over to the left, but no Jesus, no applause. Today we will see that Jesus was the “man of the hour” in several ways, but never for the applause, never to call attention to Himself. Today we will learn that Jesus was the “man of the hour” in Cana where He solved a small problem with a small miracle to point to Himself as the “man of the hour” on the cross where He would solve a much bigger problem with a much bigger miracle.

No one knew, except the servants and His disciples, that Jesus was the “man of the hour” at Cana. For this newly married couple, a major disaster occurred that threatened their weeklong, joyous celebration. The wine ran out. Aware of the situation and the impending embarrassment, Mary informs her son of the problem.

Jesus’ answer seems a bit surprising. “Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come” (John 2:4). Although unusual for a son to refer to his mother as “woman,” it was not disrespectful. Jesus looks beyond the present hour, beyond the celebration and friends and family. This was not His hour. He did not come to solve petty little socially disgracing problems. His hour was yet to come.

Mary does not feel rebuked, however. She tells the servants to do whatever Jesus says. She feels confident that He will be able to help. After all, she had known Jesus for a few years! You know what happens. Following Jesus’ instructions, the servants fill six large stone water jars with water. The water becomes wine, one-hundred-twenty to one hundred-eighty gallons of wine! It was the best wine anyone had ever tasted! Jesus was “man of the hour” at Cana, but not for the applause. Not many knew. This was not His hour. His hour was yet to come.

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When you think of Jesus' miracles—walking on the water, feeding thousands, healing the sick, casting out demons, raising the dead—changing water into wine seems pretty small. Indeed, it was. But John reminds us that this small miracle to solve a small problem was a very big sign. “This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him” (John 2:11). Epiphany focuses our attention on making Jesus known for who He really was. Small or large, Jesus never performed miracles for the applause. They were signs, pointing to Him as the Son of God, the Messiah, the “man of the hour” so to speak—but not yet, not now. This was not His hour. His hour was yet to come.

But His hour would come, the hour He refers to when answering His mother. He would pray that it would not. “And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him” (Mark 14:35). He accepted it when it did. “[T]he hour has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners” (Mark 14:41b). His hour finally came. All the signs pointed to it. Jesus, the Son of God, was “man of the hour” on the cross. There was no applause only mocking and pain and suffering and blood and forsakenness and death and . . . a miracle! “But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5). This was His hour. It finally had come.

In contrast to Cana where He solved a small problem with a small miracle, as “man of the hour” on the cross, He solves a big problem with a big miracle! The big problem? Sin! Sin is *your* big problem and *my* big problem. We are “people of the hour” when it comes to sin. Oh, it's ingrained in us to deny this, right? From little on we whine, “It's not my fault.” “I didn't do it.” We live in a society that takes it even further and denies sin by calling it something else. We call

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homosexuality a “lifestyle,” abortion a “choice,” killing human embryos a “path to a cure,” and euthanasia the “compassionate relief of suffering.”

Sin is not seen as a big problem in society and we don't like to think of it as a big problem either. Sin itself doesn't like to be seen as a big problem, and so it distracts us by elevating the importance of little things, you know like weddings! Now I'm sure that raised a few eyebrows! But think about it. The bride and groom get all caught up in the details of the wedding—invitations, guest lists, colors, flowers, hairdos, dresses, tuxedos, rehearsal dinners, receptions—you know what I mean. Everything must be perfect. And when the punch bowl gets knocked over and there is no one there to change water into punch, it's a major catastrophe. There are tears and angry words and, “Oh, my! What will people think?”

Then after a few years of marriage you laugh at the punch bowl incident and realize that, in the big scheme of things, all those details of the wedding were not so important and it's your marriage that is most important. Indeed, the older you get the less important a lot of things become. Even the struggles and sufferings and losses of life are not as important as what to do about the root cause of them all—sin. No matter how much we seek to deny it or rename it, sin remains part of us. It breaks forth in all kinds of ways both subtle and sordid. Sin brings guilt and regret, depression and despair. Its wages are death and hell and eternal separation from God. Sin renders us incapable of doing anything about it. Sin is a *BIG* problem!

That's why we need Jesus, the “man of the hour” and the big miracle of His cross and resurrection. That's why we need the healing He brings for our sin-caused wounds. And Jesus still “manifests his glory” and reveals Himself to us through water and wine that we might believe in Him. In the waters of baptism, the faith-creating power of His word miraculously

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flows into our hearts uniting us to Him, crucifying our sinful self, and raising us to new life. In the bread and wine of His holy supper, He miraculously gives us His body and blood and through them brings forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation.

Jesus was the “man of the hour” at Cana solving a small problem in a small way. His hour had not yet come. But when it did, He became the “man of the hour” on the cross solving the big problem of sin through the big miracle of His crucifixion and resurrection. Now, having revealed Himself to us, He becomes the “man of the hour” in our lives. In your brightest hour, in your darkest hour, the “man of the hour” is there. He rejoices with you. He comforts and strengthens you. He points you to His promises for they all find their “yes” and their certainty in Him. When your last hour comes, the “man of the hour” will be there as well to welcome you to the glory of His wedding feast. There you will not hear, “No more wine.” There will be plenty of the best wine you have ever tasted! But you will hear, “No more death! No more mourning! No more crying! No more pain!” (Revelation 21:4)

In the meantime, we have some “hours” to put in. Those hours are to be centered on the “man of the hour” and making Him known to the world as the Messiah, the Son of God that they might believe in Him. Now at this point I could give examples of various mission fields available to us from foreign missions to those in our own neighborhoods. But on this Sanctity of Human Life Sunday, I would like to point out a mission field we do not always think about for making Jesus known: the life issues.

Usually when people think of life issues, they think of “political” or “social” or “controversial” issues and come to the erroneous conclusion that we should not be talking about them in church. But do you know what I call issues of life and death, pain and suffering, fear and

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anxiety, sin and guilt, regret and grief, end of life decisions? I call them “spiritual” and “biblical” issues! The Gospel of Jesus Christ is tailor made for such issues. People in these difficult “hours” need to know about the “man of the hour”!

How do we go about making Jesus known in this mission field? First, we can *be* the love of Christ for people dealing with life issues. Remember, we are the body of the “man of the hour.” We are His arms of love and forgiveness to extend to that pregnant teen in her hour of fear and anxiety. We love her and provide for her needs whatever they may be. We are His arms of hope and healing to extend to those who have given in to the pressure and aborted their babies and are in an hour of great regret and grief. Only the “man of the hour” on the cross can lift and bear such a burden. We are His hands of support for the frail elderly, the ill and the dying in their hour of feeling alone, helpless, and useless. Through us the “man of the hour” brings His presence, His strength, His purpose for their lives. We could go on, but the point is that the life issues provide so many opportunities to be Christ’s love for people.

Then, as we minister to people in their hours of need and share the love of Christ, His Spirit may give us opportunity to share the Christ of love, the “man of the hour,” the man for their “hours” so that they too might believe in Him. Amen.