

Epiphany 2C, 2013

Text: John 2:1-11

Title: The Nervous Groom

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The young groom was nervous, like most grooms are. He was nervous about his future life as a husband and as a father. He was nervous about taking care of his young bride. He was nervous about providing for her, and getting along with the new in-laws. He was excited, he was happy, but a little bit scared, too.

At the moment, he was nervous about the wedding itself. He and his family had to provide for all the guests. They had to provide not just one meal, but food for an entire week. There were lots of guests. And the guests ate a lot. And they drank a lot. His family wasn't poor, but they weren't wealthy, either.

It seemed like the guest list wouldn't stop growing. He remembered when his mom told him she had invited her friend Mary, from Nazareth. And if she invited Mary, she had to invite all of Mary's kids. And Mary's oldest son (what was his name again?) wanted to bring twelve of his friends, and it seemed to him like the whole thing was getting out of hand.

And so the groom was nervous and he worried that the food and the wine would last the week. It would be so embarrassing if he ran out and his guests had to leave early. That would have shamed him to no end. There was the "master of the feast" to handle all the details, but with such a large crowd, he didn't know if he was up to the job.

Soon his worst fears were beginning to be realized. He noticed that pours of wine were getting smaller and smaller. He could tell that the servants were mixing more and more water with the wine to try to stretch it out longer and make it last.

And then they stopped bringing wine altogether. People were whispering. Some were making jokes. Others were looking for their cloaks and heading for the doors.

This is not the way he wanted his marriage to start. This is not how he wanted his new wife and her family to see him. He was frustrated, and he was starting to get angry.

Just then, a servant came looking for him. The master of the banquet wanted to see him. Finally, he would get some answers.

The groom found the master of the banquet out back by the water purification jars. This is where the guests had washed before entering the banquet hall. But he noticed that the jars weren't full of water, they looked darker and the aroma of wine practically overwhelmed him.

The master of the banquet was smiling and shaking his head. “Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the best wine until now.”

The groom breathed a sigh of relief. Here was more wine than they could possibly ever need, and the best quality, too.

He asked the master of the banquet where it had come from, but he didn't know. The master assumed that the groom had hidden it away.

But the servants knew. They were the ones who had filled the jars. They were the ones who had brought the wine to the master. They were the ones who had met this carpenter's son from Nazareth, with a bit of a nosy mom. They knew that it had been water that had miraculously turned to wine.

And you know, too. John let you in on the secret. It's not always clear where our blessings come from, but you know that every good and perfect gift comes from God.

God gives you blessings beyond your expectation, beyond what you can imagine. Not just the basics, not just the bare minimum, but your life is overflowing, filled to the brim with His blessings.

We confess in the creed, “I believe that God has made me and all creatures, that He has given me my body and soul, eyes ears and all my members, my reason and all my senses and still takes care of them. He also gives me clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, wife and children, land, animals and all I have. He daily and richly provides me with all that I need to support this body and life.”

Think back over your life and all the blessings that God has given you. Think of all the talents and skills He's given to you, how He has provided for you over the years. Think of all the special people that He has put in your life. Your parents, your family, your friends and neighbors. All these are gifts from God.

They are gifts that you don't deserve, that you haven't earned. “All this He does, purely out of Fatherly divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me.”

The groom at Cana certainly didn't deserve 150 gallons of free, top shelf wine. But Jesus loved him. He didn't want to see him embarrassed or ashamed. He wanted that groom and bride to have a wonderful wedding banquet, He wanted their life together to start in the right way. And so He gave them a truly blessed banquet.

The blessings that Jesus gives you are more than just wine, more than just a roof over your head and clothes on your backs.

Jesus gives you eternal blessings, forgiving your sins and inviting you to the heavenly banquet, where you will experience a meal, a feast beyond your wildest dreams.

This came at a cost, though. Jesus was thirsty. Jesus drank the sour wine-vinegar on the cross, so that you could drink the finest of wines in heaven.

One of my favorite movies is “Babette’s Feast.” The scene is set in the 1800s in a remote Danish fishing village. The people there live very plain, very simple lives. One day a refugee from France comes to live with them. She is escaping a civil war and has nothing. She is taken in two older women in the town, sisters who have never married. The woman’s name is Babette.

Babette settles into life in the village, and is given the task of cooking for several of the older villagers. She is shown how they prepare their simple meals of bread, soup and fish. It’s a rough life, but people are used to it.

After living there several years, Babette receives word that she has won the lottery back in France. She tells the villagers that she is going to prepare a celebration feast for the whole town. One day the special food for the banquet arrives. There are bottles of wine and champagne, and wheels of cheese, exotic ingredients like caviar and truffles, quail, even a live turtle.

The villagers are curious about all these strange foods, but they are a little worried, too. They are afraid that it might be sinful to eat and drink such extravagant food. They are afraid that the food and wine might lead them to become too emotional and exuberant, that the meal itself might be Satanic. They decide among themselves that they will be polite, they will attend the banquet, but they will remain restrained and unemotional, and not even comment about the food.

When the meal is served, however, something strange happens to the villagers. As they try all this rich, luxurious food, they begin to relax and let their guards down. They actually enjoy themselves and each other’s company. Old grudges are settled. They smile and laugh. Instead of being crotchety and irritable, they are relaxed and joyful.

As it turns out, Babette was a chef at one of the top restaurants in Paris before coming to stay with them, and they were eating a meal fit for kings.

After the meal is over, the villagers are sad, because they expect Babette to return home to France with the rest of her money. But then Babette reveals to them, that there is no money left. She’s spent it all on the feast. She’s spent it all on them.

In a few moments, you will be invited here to another feast, a feast of extraordinary fare. You will feast on the saving, immortal body and blood of Jesus Christ Himself.

This was a costly meal, a meal that cost Jesus everything he had. A meal you didn’t deserve. But Jesus loves you so much that He draws you out of your mundane life for a time a feasting and celebration.

And Jesus doesn’t back up and leave after the banquet. He stays with you to go out with you back into your everyday life.

Don't worry, don't be nervous, don't be afraid. Jesus is with you. He blessed the wedding at Cana with His presence and provided a wonderful wedding gift. He gave the people there joy and gladness. Jesus will bless you and provide for in ways that you never even imagined.

And when you experience His blessings, His generosity, it will change you into generous, giving people. You have been so richly blessed, it only makes sense to share those blessings with people around you. The wine at Cana was not just for the groom, but for all the people at the feast. God will use you to bless people around you in extraordinary and unexpected ways.

And don't forget to invite those folks to the wedding banquet. The banquet here, where Jesus comes to you in the Lord's Supper, and also the great wedding banquet in heaven that will never end.