

“Spiritual Wine: An Affection for Living Truth”

LaPorte New Church Swedenborgian

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Prayer of Invocation

O Lord our Redeemer, let this be a fruitful day! In this time of worship, open our eyes to beauty, tune our ears to harmony. The fragrance of your Love permeating every moment. The touch of your hand guiding all we do. Your Spirit filling our hearts to overflowing, with the best life offers!. Amen.

Scriptures

Leviticus 18:5; 19:37

John 2:1-12

Hymns/Songs

“As the Deer”

“Have Thine Own Way, Lord”

“Lord, Dismiss Us with Thy Blessing” #69

Leviticus 18:5; 19:37

“⁵You shall therefore keep my statutes and my rules; if a person does them, he shall live by them: I am the LORD.”

“³⁷ And you shall observe all my statutes and all my rules, and do them: I am the LORD.”

John 2:1-12

The Wedding at Cana

2 On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. **2** Jesus also was invited to the wedding with His disciples. **3** When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to Him, “They have no wine.” **4** And Jesus said to her, “**Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come.**” **5** His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.”

6 Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. **7** Jesus said to the servants, “**Fill the jars with water.**” And they filled them up to the brim. **8** And He said to them, “**Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast.**” So they took it. **9** When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom **10** and said to him, “Everyone serves the good wine first, and

when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now.” ¹¹ This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested His glory. And His disciples believed in Him.

¹² After this He went down to Capernaum, with His mother and His brothers and His disciples, and they stayed there for a few days.

**MAY THE GOOD LORD BLESS THE HEARING,
THE UNDERSTANDING AND THE LIVING OF HIS HOLY WORD. AMEN**

[2nd Hymn sung here]

Insight for Worship

Teachings on Life no. 1-2 by Emanuel Swedenborg

“EVERYONE who has any religion knows and acknowledges that people who lead a good life are saved and people who lead an evil life are damned. That is, they know and acknowledge that if we lead a good life we think good things not only about God but also about our neighbor, which is not the case if we lead an evil life. What we love constitutes our life, and whatever we love we not only do freely but also think freely. So we say that life is doing good things because doing good things is inseparable from thinking good things. If this doing and this thinking are not working together in us, then they are not part of our life. Religion is about how we live and that the religious way to live is to do good.”

SERMON: “Spiritual Wine: An Affection for Living Truth”

This story in *John 2* of the Lord and His disciples attending a wedding in Cana of Galilee has long piqued my interest. For me this is due to the fact that immediately after the most mystically meaningful and glorious chapter 1 in *John*, then there is this seemingly sudden shift from the upper levels of divinity down into the ordinary in life. John begins his amazing gospel with a statement that has changed the course of human history on Earth: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. ⁴ In him was life, and the life was the light of men. ¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:1-4, 14) Then in chapter 1 of *John* we are led to feel into and enjoy how the Lord went about calling some of His disciples, including Andrew,

John, Phillip and Nathanael. *John 1* closes with these powerful words, when Christ says to Nathanael, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.” (vs. 51) Doesn’t this sentence remind you of what we read about last Sunday, about the great moment in Jacob’s young life, when he was given a life-altering dream, which we call, “Jacob’s Ladder”?

So, that’s how *John 1* concludes. And then we turn the page of our Bibles and look what comes next: a wedding in the Galilean town of Cana, where Jesus Christ performs His first astonishing miracle, turning six large jars of water into the choicest wine for a wedding feast. How does this story relate to the amazing words we find in *John 1*? It relates to it by giving us an everyday example of how the infinite divinity and love of God began manifesting beautifully within the ordinary moments of life—even into the sublime and the sublim journeys we may be having within marriage.

The truth is that the Lord cares a lot about marriage, for it was intended by God from the beginning to be one of the deepest and most growth-filled depths of bonding between two married partners—**an experience of friendship within love that nothing else can equal**. But then, something very unfortunate happens within many marriages—the wine runs out! Throughout the Gospels we see time and again that Christ was often set within a background of simple and humble people and settings. Through the incarnate person of God-in-Christ we can say that **“God Almighty was domesticated.”** These scriptures bring the infinite God humbly inside of the family circle and into the ordinary things of life. Even more so, this charming story shows us that in our everyday occasions, the Lord’s glory and kindness can flow into them beautifully—if we choose to give God the chance to do so.

I have come to realize that there is a bizarre paradox within the attitude of many people regarding the place they call home. Most of us would admit on the one hand that there is no more precious a place in all the world as our own home. And yet, at the same time, we would also have to admit that also within our own homes we claim the right to behave far more boorishly, discourteously and impolitely than we would dare to be in any social setting of strangers. So many people on Earth sustain this unfortunate paradox. If only many, many more of us spiritually half-baked and partially regenerated children of God would remember this story in *John 2* where the Lord manifested His lovingkindness and glory...at a local wedding among the poor peasants of Galilee. [We must remember and spread the word that to the Lord, home was a place wherein nothing but the best was good enough.](#)

Looking briefly at the inner, symbolic meaning of this splendid occasion where Christ and five of His disciples attended a wedding where Mary was in charge, we find revealed to us that **our special moments and occasions in life can be a time where we feast together on a bounty of both love and wisdom.** This story illustrates how vital it is that we freely choose to open up our hearts, minds and lives towards an abundant reception of true thoughts and good affections, which feed and strengthen our spirits for facing the challenges life often brings.

Wine in particular symbolizes the many ways that we can enjoy a feast of heavenly living, rather than a merely cold, intellectual knowledge that certain ways of living are right. Wine represents for us a depth and quality of knowing made sweet and delectable by a happy perception that BOTH our higher times and our ordinary days are ordained by God to flow freely with the Divine's goodness, which we feel easily on our wedding days. But, in addition to this inner meaning of this story, it also teaches us that just like the way that so many marriages usually begin with their "honeymoon phase" that then gradually cools off and deteriorates into a relationship void of joy and gladness, so often the same kind of cooling off can happen in other areas of life—such as in how we are connected with the church and the Lord, where a once joyful attitude had reigned, eventually things may become dominated by a lackluster feeling and obligation only. How true it is, that we can allow ourselves to lose the deep inspirations, which only God can provide. **This story of a wedding at Cana tells us that just as how the Lord performed a miracle by turning 6 large 30-gallon stone jars of water into the best quality of wine we can enjoy, through our spiritual bonding and vulnerability we can feel in our relationship with Christ, only He can bless our thoughts and feelings into an even deeper happiness and kindness than we once knew at the first.**

This happy occasion early on in John's Gospel record ennoble the spiritual discipline of doing spiritually what the Jews of Jesus' time did upon entry into their homes. Those large water pots were filled with cleansing water, used to wash off a traveler's feet that were caked with either dust or mud. This ritual was their preparation for enjoying their good life and the wine. This story teaches us that when our inspirations fail in life, when we stop exposing our minds to new depths of learning what is true and good by means of ongoing self-examination and removal of evils in our lives, **then God will not force His way into our aching souls.** Those water jars were filled to the brim with good water—reminding us that we shall not engage in short lived repentance, but rather the kind of repentance and changes in life that are thorough and well-integrated. **This is what we must do before the Lord can give again the happy and**

joyful receptivity of His life-force symbolized by the joys and gladness we may feel at a wedding and its wedding reception.

In fact, when we choose the fuller depth of ongoing self-examination coupled with making powerful reforms within how we treat others and ourselves, then the Lord can bless us with even deeper degrees of happiness and substance, which flow even better than when we were younger. So, in this sense, we see that the Lord is telling us the eternal truth that rather than life becoming more and more of a humdrum and lifeless never-ending experience of disappointments, the truth is that laying deeper within the ordinariness of everyday living are more and more **“spiritual marriages of goodness and truth.”**

So, in conclusion, this oh so sweet true story of what happened one day when Christ and five of His disciples attended a local wedding, when as John records it the Lord performed the first of many miracles, **we find a charming and saving truth for us all.** That is, just as Christ was gradually glorified and transformed after each inward victory where He overcame selfishness with His love, He then manifested forth His glory! This was His blueprint for transformational living—which He gives personally to every one of us. Letting the Lord fill us with His wine, which is a heavenly affection for living the goodness of spiritual truths on all levels of our lives, is what we all were born to enjoy. This is what our theology teaches us when it says in these simple yet profound words, **“...doing good things is inseparable from thinking good things. If this doing and this thinking are not working together in us, then they are not part of our life. Religion is about how we live and that the religious way to live is to do good.”** (*Teachings on Life*, n. 2)

Amen.