**2nd Sunday after the Epiphany – Year C – January 20, 2013 – Faith Lutheran, Radcliff, KY**

**Based on John 2:1-11 written by Pastor Paul Horn**

**Where’s my miracle?**

**Jesus changes water into wine**

**Jesus changes my unbelief into faith**

*On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus’ mother was there, 2and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. 3When the wine was gone, Jesus’ mother said to him, “They have no more wine.” 4“Dear woman, why do you involve me?” Jesus replied. “My time has not yet come.” 5His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.” 6Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons. 7Jesus said to the servants, “Fill the jars with water”; so they filled them to the brim. Then he told them, “Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet.” They did so, 9and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside 10and said, “Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now.” 11This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.*

It will be a miracle if Robert Griffin III is back on the football field opening day in September, following this recent knee surgery. It will be a miracle if gun control advocates and those who side with the NRA can come to a compromise.

It will be a miracle… what is a miracle? As Christians we look at everything through the lens of the Bible. We know that the omnipotent, Triune God, created and preserves the world. We know that he enacted the laws of nature. Things run their natural course. But being Almighty God, at times, he decides to act contrary to nature; a miracle.

It is the nature of the human body not to reproduce after a certain age, yet God enabled Abraham, age 100, and Sarah, age 90, to have a son, Isaac. It is the nature of lions to eat their prey, yet God shut their mouths and spared the life of Daniel. By nature, dead people stay dead, but the apostle Paul took the hand of a young man by the name of Eutychus and brought him back to life (Acts 20.9).

Why does God perform miracles? Why does he empower his people to perform miracles? In our story this morning from John 2, the apostle answers that question, **“This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed in Cana of Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.”** The miracle is a sign. It proves Jesus’ claim that his Word is true; he is the Messiah, the Savior sent from God.

Miracles Jesus performed were not meant to create faith. The Holy Spirit creates faith in the heart of a sinner through the power of the Word of God. God wanted people not to look to miracles, but the message. The same was true with the apostles and prophets. God enabled his people to perform miracles to substantiate their message, “I speak the Word of God, here is proof.” But it was not always an automatic guarantee that a messenger came from God because he/she performed miracles. The Bible also tells us that the devil tries to deceive people through counterfeit signs and wonders. God encourages us again and again to test the message to see if it is true to God’s Word.

Today, God’s prophets and evangelists do not need to perform miracles to substantiate their message. We have the complete testimony of the Bible. Could the Holy Spirit give that power to his people today? Yes he could. But the basis for our faith is not miracles but the message of Jesus. But it would be nice to see a miracle, wouldn’t it? Wouldn’t your faith in God’s promises be strengthened if you witnessed something miraculous? My friends, we do, everyday… and that’s what we will explore in the sermon this morning…

This story is so simple it almost tells itself. John begins by saying, **“On the third day.”** The first day Jesus had called Andrew and Peter, James and John, to be full-time disciples. The second day he called Nathanael and Philip. On the third day we find these men in Cana, a small town west of the Sea of Galilee. **“Jesus’ mother was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding.”** Mary was most likely a friend or relative of the bride and/or groom. Jesus’ presence at wedding shows us that he blesses the union of a man and a woman in marriage (Hebrews 13.4).

But catastrophe strikes, **“When the wine was gone, Jesus’ mother said to him, ‘They have no more wine.’”** In Jesus’ day, the marriage celebration lasted the better part of a week. To run out of wine during this celebration would be a great embarrassment to the wedding host.

Why does Mary approach Jesus with this social disaster? She knows who he is. She pondered in her heart the words of the angel Gabriel, the words of Simeon and Anna in the temple, her son’s conduct as a 12-year old boy occupying himself in the temple “with his Father’s business.” He had not performed a miracle yet, but Mary looks to him in faith and expects nothing less than a miracle from God’s Son.

Jesus’ response is not rude or impolite. Addressing a female as “woman” was a polite salutation in those days. **“Why do you involve me? My time has not yet come.”** Perhaps a better translation, “What is that to me and you?” Meaning, “This is not your concern but mine alone. If any help is to be given, it is something only I can do. My time to help has not yet come. All in due time, dear woman.” Mary shows her faith again, commanding the servants, **“Do whatever he tells you.”**

Nearby stood six large capacity water jars – each holding 20-30 gallons – used by the Jews for washing. 6 jars = 180 gallons = 25 cases or 300 bottles of wine. Jesus does not skimp. He lavishes the wedding family with only the best. The manager of the feast – the caterer or wedding planner if you will – is astonished. This is top shelf wine! Water that had been turned into wine.

Again, the main theme of the story, **“This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed in Cana of Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.”** The miracle is a sign. The miracle proves Jesus’ claim that he is the Messiah, that he is true God. And the disciples were strengthened and confirmed in their faith more firmly than before.

But Jesus didn’t perform miracles like a dog performing tricks for his owner. King Herod looked for a miracle from Jesus, to be entertained. Jesus refused. Herod wasn’t interested in hearing what Jesus had to say about sin and grace. The Pharisees demanded proof that Jesus was God. Jesus wouldn’t perform a miracle. Instead he told them, “You have the law and the prophets, listen to that. Believe on God’s Word, because you will not believe even if someone rises from the dead.” (Luke 16.19-31)

Are you looking for a miracle? What miracle would you like to Jesus to perform so you know he’s there, a sign to let you know he still loves you and that everything is going to be ok? Have you said to yourself, “I need a sign to know that my job isn’t going away, to know that I will get a job that will adequately provide for my family, because right now, things aren’t looking so good. I need a sign to know that my spouse and I can work out our differences, because right now, things aren’t looking so good. I need a sign to know that I am not going to be single for the rest of my life, because right now I’m very lonely. I need a sign that my health or the health of my loved one will improve. Right now, I feel like I’m in a pit, looking up, and there’s no way out. I need a sign to know I’ll be ok and that eventually someone will throw a rope down so I can climb out.” Where’s my miracle?

Have we been guilty of putting faith in miracles, needing a sign to strengthen faith? Have we been guilty of saying, “God needs to prove himself for me to believe!” Our worry and anxiety, and fears, God calls those things unbelief.

We are not the only ones who are guilty of this… One day the Pharisees and teachers of the law asked Jesus, “Teacher, we want to see a miraculous sign from you.” Something spectacular, a sign from heaven, to prove that you are who you say you are. But Jesus had just healed a mute man. What more did they want? He replied, **“No sign will be given to you except the sign of Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. (And rise again).”** (Matthew 12.38ff) My friends, this is the miraculous sign Jesus gives us: he lived for us, he died for us, he rose again for us, and we believe it.

Jesus’ life is a miracle. His incarnation, the fact that he, true God, took on human flesh, is miraculous, but that it was done for us, is amazing. As God and Man Jesus lived a life never fearing, never anxious, never doubting, but always trusting, always confident, always believing in his Father’s promises. Impossible! We worried about something this morning already. But Jesus did it. He did this all for you.

Jesus’ death is a miracle. From the Roman Soldiers who gambled for his clothing to the nails that pierced his flesh, all the details were predicted and carried out with precision. Even the prophecies that spoke of how your fear, your doubt, your despair would die with him, were fulfilled. He did this all for you.

Jesus’ resurrection is a miracle. Naturally, dead people stay dead. Jesus defied the laws of nature and on the third day began breathing, heart started pumping, blood flowing and eyes opened and he lives today. Impossible! But he did this for you.

The miracle is that we believe it. It is the nature of human beings to hate God, to be his enemies, to die in sin and unbelief, and yet God makes enemies his friends and he brings life to those who are dead. He gives sight to the blind. God worked the faith in your heart through another miracle: the water and word of Baptism…

It is the nature of water to wash and to clean. But to wash away sins, to grant eternal life? Impossible! It’s just water! But in baptism Jesus attaches his command and promise to the water. The mouth that said, “Let there be light,” and there it was, is the same mouth that says, “Make disciples by baptizing them.” God the Holy Spirit worked a miracle through that Word of Jesus and the water. Through baptism the light of faith and belief were created in your heart. Yes, miracles happen here, at the font. A miracle happened for you. Once dead, you are now alive with Christ through baptism.

Want more miracles from God? It is the nature of bread and wine to sustain, to nourish, but to give forgiveness, to save from the devil’s power and from sin? It’s just bread and wine! Through Christ’s almighty word, the mouth that uttered, “Let there be sun, moon and stars,” and they appeared, is the same mouth that said, “Eat this bread, it is my body. Drink this wine, it is my blood.” Yes, it is there, in and with the bread and wine, the same body and blood he possesses now in heaven he allows to be present today. I don’t understand it. I cannot comprehend it. But he promises it. Yes, miracles happen here at the altar, for you. He promises through this miracle of his holy supper to strengthen your faith. He promises to empower you, so that you will leave the table satisfied and nourished.

Want more miracles from your God? It is the nature of words to move people to action or inaction, to evoke emotion, to rouse to anger, to bring joy. But words that are over 2,000 years old? Are they still good today? Yes, through the miracle of the power of the Word of God, the Holy Spirit changes lives forever. Those words that tell how much Jesus loves you have the power to comfort you, to forgive you, to guide you through life to heaven. A miracle? Yes. Impossible? No. Because they are the words of your Almighty God.

If God has done these miracles for me, what other miracles will he do for me? He will provide my daily bread. He will give me clothes, food and a home. By growing a money tree in my backyard? No… he causes the sun to shine, the rain to fall, the seeds to grow, he gives me strength and ability to work and earn money so that I can put food in my pantry and clothes on my body. A miracle! He will protect and preserve me – he promises that his holy angels watch over me while sleeping or awake. And no matter now bleak my medical chart looks, I will rest secure in God’s almighty hands, knowing that if he decides not to miraculously heal my body, he will raise my body from its coffin or urn. He will breathe life into me, and I will live in this body forever and ever, and never die. That kind of thing don’t happen normally, but our God isn’t normal either, and so I will die trusting in the miracle of the resurrection. Which means…

…I have all the miracles I need. Jesus changes water into wine. He changed my dead heart and made it alive. He proves that he is God and will continue to be God and do whatever he needs to… to sustain me, to keep me safe in his arms, and he will do whatever he needs to… to bring me safely home. There is my miracle. Amen.