**Crossings Text Study Group – All Are Welcome!**

**Wednesday Mornings at 9:30 A.M.**

**Martin Luther Lutheran Church, Milwaukee**

Dear Friends: For the Second Sunday of Epiphany the lectionary takes us away from Luke and into John: specifically, John 2:1-11. It is the first of seven “signs” John recounts, all intent on giving us a glimpse, drip by drip, into the identity of Jesus. In other words, these signs are little “epiphanies” into the God-made-human Jesus. And like all “signs” the main thing is not the literal stuff out of which it is made, but the insight to which it points.

The episode is filled with symbolism and double entendre that communicates more than just facts, but meaning. For example, it happens on the “third day” (v. 1), anticipating/foreshadowing his rising from the dead on the third day, the crowning moment (the dripping is over) in which God “revealed [the fullness of] [Jesus’] glory,” the bringer of new life, and after which “his disciples believed in him” (v. 11) knowing full well who he was.

The symbolism of a wedding feast is also significant. Marriage is more than an ordinary event in the life of people. In Genesis 2 it symbolizes the crowning/culminating event of God’s creation that brings forth rejoicing: “This at last is bone of my bone…” (Gen 2:23). That God brings the two together as one means that they exist as partners not only for one another, but also with God in the ongoing process of creation.

But then comes Genesis 3 where the two become partners against God, leading to their split with God (who becomes their chief accuser), their split with one another (in which they become mutual accusers) and the decline and demise of creation (bringing forth weeds). That, I suggest, is what is meant when Mary breaks the news to Jesus that “they have no wine.” The fruitfulness of the old creation is running dry, the reason for rejoicing is evaporating. Although the partiers don’t know it, the servants at the party do.

Why did the servants turn to Mary with this bad news? I think it is because in John’s poetic imagination she is a symbol of the Church, the new humanity that is being created and gathered by Jesus at the foot of the cross (cf. John 19:26). Note, in both passages Mary is called “woman” by Jesus. That is not a putdown, but an affirmation that she is the new Eve, the new woman, the mother of those who have new life in Christ. Of course, we must be careful with these titles. The irony is sharp, the parallelism jagged and the imagery must not be pushed too far. For even as the mother of Jesus, Mary is redeemed and recreated by the One to whom she gave birth. She symbolizes the church because the church is the “body” in which sinners become children of God, siblings of Jesus, born by the Spirit to eternal life.

But note what Mary as the church, our mother, does in this text? When the servants of the party make her aware of the fact that the wine is running out, that the fruitfulness of this old creation is drying up, she points them to Jesus. By so doing she reminds us what the church is all about: it directs the world and its problems to Jesus.

But here we must be careful. When Mary presents the problem to Jesus, he gives her a strange reply: “What concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.” Jesus seems quite aware that his help could be misunderstood, the way, for example, it will later be misunderstood when, after feeding the 5000, they wanted to make him a bread king (John 6:15). One tragic misunderstanding about Jesus is to think of him as a prosperity messiah: that following him will magically make this world work to my liking. Both Jesus and Mary know better. Both know that when Jesus’ “hour comes,” i.e., his death and resurrection, it will mean death for the old creation (this life) and birth for the new creation (eternal life).

The water jars for purification are also filled with symbolism. They are the jars used for the Jewish rite of purification, the washing that will be needed when the party ends. They symbolize the need for purification as a fact of life. They remind us that all things, even good things, come to an end. Or do they? In dramatic fashion Jesus directs the servants to fill the jars with water. The quantity of water is huge to match measure of purification needed.

But now the plot turns and takes on the unexpected. Jesus tells the servants to take a draw of the water to the chief steward to drink. They do and he does—and surprise! The water has turned to wine. And not ordinary wine. This is the “best wine” the chief steward has tasted.

Of course, most of the people were oblivious to where this wine came from. But the disciples knew and they “believed in him.” For in the sign of the changing of water into wine they got more than a miracle, they got a glimpse, and epiphany, into Jesus’ “glory” to come: his cross and resurrection, through which he brings about a new creation, changing sinners into children of God and the dead into heirs of eternal life. We disciples, too, get a taste of that glory when we eat of the supper he has prepared for us: his body and blood given with bread and wine. Most people may not where that meal comes from either, but we do. And it is the “best bread and wine” we have ever tasted.

**Martin Luther Lutheran Church --**  9235 W. Bluemound Rd, Milwaukee, WI 53226

**Wednesdays -- 9:30-11 a.m.**

Crossings has developed a visual model for organizing the message of a particular biblical text based on the simple idea of distinguishing law and gospel, God’s own diagnosis of what ails us and God’s own prescription of what heals us.  The model is useful for everyone, both those who listen to and those who proclaim the text, because it helps to remind us what to focus on and listen for in the process of reading and understanding a biblical text and relating or crossing it into our daily life.

Who: Anyone interested in studying the Bible – clergy and lay, preachers and listeners

What: We will learn the Crossing Method by using it on the texts that everyone will hear on Sunday Morning

Questions? Email me or call me at 262-642-6303

For more Info on Crossings go to [www.crossings.org](http://www.crossings.org)

I look forward to exploring the Scriptures with you together,

Peace,

Steve Kuhl

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