

February 29, 2012

Questions for Lent and Easter
The Timing Question
John 2:1-11

Opening Words: John Simone Sr. once said, "*The key to wisdom is knowing all the right questions.*" I think, he is right. Even without answers, questions have value. After all, what is a question? A question is nothing more than a request for more information. Only fools think they know everything. How many questions have you asked in the past week? How many questions have you asked in the past month? How many questions have you asked in the past year? Jesus asked twenty questions in the Gospel of John. Those questions are the foundation of my newest twelve part sermon series, *Questions for Lent and Easter*. We are going to look at twelve different questions the Master asked. Each one is an excellent question because each one is timeless.

This is message number three. The first two questions came from the first chapter of John, *The Life Question and A Question of Spiritual Immaturity*. The third question comes from the two chapter of John. May God give you ears to hear this evening's Gospel lesson, John 2:1-11. It is the story of Jesus' first miracle. Let me call this meditation *The Timing Question*.

John 2:1-11 1 On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, 2 and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. 3 When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine." 4 "Woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My hour has not yet come." 5 His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." 6 Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons. 7 Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim. 8 Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." They did so, 9 and 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 10 and 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." 11 What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

Do you remember the story of Edward Hairston? He made the news back in September. Do you remember his story? For eight years he bought a group lottery ticket with his other twenty-two co-workers. Then in June he hurt his back and went on a three month medical leave. He wasn't scheduled to go back

to work until September. On August 5 the other twenty-two co-workers hit the lottery. They won \$22 million! Edward won nothing because he was home with his ailing back. He is now suing the others twenty-two winners for his fair share, about \$2 million. His lawyer says there was an implied agreement that co-workers would cover for each other when they were out due to illness or vacation. Can I state the obvious? Timing isn't just important; timing can be everything. And all of God's people said, "**Amen!**"

At the very heart of this evening's scripture lesson is the issue of timing. Let us look at the scripture together. We are in the second chapter of John. The scene is a wedding reception. The truth is we know more about wedding receptions in first century Palestine than we do the wedding service. We know that hospitality was taken seriously. Everyone had to feel welcomed; everyone had to have a good time. According to the text, everyone was having a good time! The wine was flowing. Then, the unthinkable happened. Someone miscalculated the amount of wine needed. Some lucky person got the last glass of wine and everyone else was left holding an empty glass. It was one of those wedding nightmares. Everyone would be talking about this for years to come. This time it is Mary who saves the day. She and Jesus, along with his disciples, were invited to the wedding. (I think it proves Jesus was fun. Who would invite a no fun person to a wedding reception?) Mary looks at her son and says, "*They have no more wine.*" (verse 3) Jesus responds to his mother in some harsh sounding words, "*Dear woman, why do you involve me? My time has not yet come.*" (verse 4) She ignored those words and instructs the servants to do as Jesus wishes. Before long, there is more wine than anyone can consume. The changing of the water into wine is remembered as the first miracle.

Can I be honest with you? I have read this story countless times. Every time I read it I found there was something wrong. There is something that irritates me about this story. I didn't see it at first but I see it now. The problem is Mary. She gets "special treatment." Look at the story with me one more time. Along with the disciples, Mary and Jesus are at a wedding reception. The unthinkable happens, the wine runs out! Mary has compassion on the hosts and asks Jesus for a favor. The text clearly says, Jesus did not want to fix this problem. However, in the end Jesus fixes the problem because no one can say no to their mother. That's the Mary story? Mary got special treatment. Has anyone here ever gotten special treatment? The answer is, "No!" We are forced to wait for God's will in God's time.

How many times have you been forced to wait for God to act? How many times have you prayed for healing but the healing never came? How many times have you prayed for a loved one to go to work but every week there is no job? How many times have we prayed for peace but our world is filled with violence? How many times have you prayed for something but nothing happened? Does anyone

here find it difficult to surrender to God's will in God's time? It happens to me all the time. If you have ever been frustrated with God's timing say, **"Amen!"**

Do you remember the story of Jesus praying in the garden called Gethsemane? Something tell me you do. It is found in Matthew, Mark and Luke. (Mt. 26:36-46; Mk. 14:32-42; Lk. 22:40-46) It is late in Jesus' earthly ministry. It is so late that the Upper Room is now a memory. Jesus went to the garden with the inner circle, Peter, James and John. The Master asks them to wait for him while he prays. The disciples did not do so well. They fell asleep. However, Jesus prays. He asks God for extra strength because he knows the cross is waiting for him. Do you remember his words? The Master prays, *"My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet, not as I will, but as you will."* A few minutes later Jesus is arrested and finds himself headed to the cross. Jesus was more interested in God's will than his own will.

We are in the season of Lent. It is important that I remind you at this moment that you are a disciple of Jesus Christ! You are trying to be a little more like Jesus everyday. With this in mind remember this: Jesus trusted God. How far do you trust God's will? How far do you trust God's timing? If that makes you ponder say, **"Amen!"**

I can not end this evening without speaking of the tragic shootings in Chardon. It is a story that hits close to home because it is close to home. Chardon is only about fifty miles away. It is one of those places you go to raise your children because you want them to be safe. The events of this week remind us of the simple truth. No place is always safe. You know the story.

Seventeen year old TJ Lane was filled with rage. He walked into the Chardon High School cafeteria, pulled out a gun and began firing on his classmates. A few seconds later one young man was dead and four were wounded. Now, there are three dead and one wounded. One has already been released from the hospital. The community of 5,000 people has been rocked to the core. I have heard countless stories of this story and have heard a mountain of words. The words that I remember best came from the school system's superintendent, Joseph Bergant II. He said, *"If you haven't hugged the children in your life, then hug them now. If you haven't told the people in your life you love them, then tell them now."*

The story reminds us life is very fragile and life does not come with guarantees. We are not Mary. We are going to get "special treatment." How far do you trust God's will? How far do you trust God's timing? Elbert Hubert (1856-1915) once said, *"God will not look you over for medals, degrees or diplomas, but for scars."* And all of God's people said, **"Amen!"**