

## Jesus - Speaks and Acts The Living Word and Verb

Again, I would like to start with music to place a lively tune in your heart and mind about the wonderful proclamation of God's love for us.

Oh How I Love Him

1.  
We see God's glo - ry,  
In a living sto - ry.  
Our loving sav - ior came,  
and Je - sus was his name.  
Born in a man - ger,  
to his own a stran - ger,  
a man of sorrow, tears and ag - o - ny.

Chorus:  
O how I love Him!  
How I a - dore Him!  
My breath, my sun - shine,  
my all in all!  
Our great Cre - a - tor sent forth my sav - ior,  
And all God's full - ness was seen in Him.

2.  
With - out re - luc - tance,  
Flesh and blood his sub - stance,  
He in the form of man,  
revealed the hid - den plan.  
O glo - rious mys - t'ry,  
gave his life on Cal - v'ry,  
and now I know you were the great "I Am."

Why do we love and adore Jesus? We spoke, in our previous homily, about Jesus as the "vision" of God metaphorically by the author of the Gospel of John. In the first chapter, in his baptismal scene the Spirit of God anoints Jesus as the human proclamation, the living Sentence - the Word and the Verb, to reveal the fullness of the mystery of God who is Spirit. As the song tells us, "and all God's fullness was seen in Him".

Marcus Borg, in his book (pg 117-119) "Speaking Christian" tells us, "To believe in somebody is not the same as believing somebody....In a Christian context, it meant having confidence in God and Jesus, trusting God and Jesus.....To believe meant not only confidence and trust in a

person, but also to hold that person dear - to believe that person.....Believing and believing were synonyms.....Think of the difference this makes....This meaning goes back to ancient Christianity....The difference between believing that and believing is older than the creed.....Believing that a set of statements are true has little transforming power. But believing God as known in Jesus has great transforming power.”

The allegorical message continue in John's Gospel to help us, as human beings, to sense God's majesty and the comprehensive love God has for all of creation and especially for God's concern for every aspect of our lives. In the first book of "beginnings", Genesis, there are 7 days of creation that describe the evolution of the universe and especially our planet earth as it brought forth all it's diversity of resource and life. As each day, "evening and morning", progressed by the word and activity of God we are told "it was good". After the 6th day, when human beings, man and woman, were formed in God's "likeness", and we are told that it was "very good". According to the first story of creation in Genesis, we are that, we as humans are good.

As our second book of "In The Beginning", John's Gospel, after the introduction of Jesus at his baptism, we move through the first 3rd of its contents with Jesus exhibiting 7 "signs" (sometimes called miracles) to depict the action of God's love among all the people to whom Jesus comes in contact. These 7 signs give us a progressive revelation of God, in the Realm or Kingdom of God, to express the Gospel, the good news, in word and action by Jesus the Christ (the anointed one), the living Word and Verb, to convey the fullness of God's love.

Galatians 5:22-23 - "But the spiritual nature produces **love, joy, peace, patience**, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There are no laws against things like that."

**LOVE** - The love of God is the primary and clear theme of John's Gospel and, in most of scripture, God is a God of love and compassion. God, who is Spirit, is the source of good and love in creation - so the "spiritual nature", according to Galatians, is first - love - then joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

## JOY - Marriage and Wine

In the first "sign" of Jesus in John's Gospel is a Wedding Feast in which Jesus turns 6 water jugs into wine. The "joy" of that feast was running low, according to John's story, and so Jesus was encouraged to remedy this situation. His mother, we are told, encouraged him to do something because the wedding host was worried that this traditional feast, normally lasting for many days, would come to an early end. Jesus not only obliges, but this wine is noted as better than anything they were drinking.

What were weddings like in Jesus' day?

I was not anything like our concept of marriage today. And, if you travel around the world, you will find a much wider view from a variety of customs.

Since the author of this Gospel does not fully answer this question and since the readers of his day would fully have such knowledge, I received some interesting information from a Rabbi friend, Gordon Gladstone. Here are some things that he shared.

- At that time, Jewish marriage was purely an act of kinyan / **acquisition**; the man, essentially, purchased a wife from the man who controlled her, be that a father, a brother, or whatever male relative. A marriage was arranged by shtar, kesef, or beeah (**document, silver, or intercourse**).
  - \* if shtar, the "groom's" agent delivers a **document** stating terms to the controlling male.
  - \* If kesef, an agreed **amount** of silver was delivered to the controlling male. [This morphed into a wedding ring in later centuries.]
  - \* If beeah, (**intercourse**) the man would fall upon the woman, penetrating her, whilst **howling**, "H'ray aht m'kudeshet li." (**Behold thou art consecrated unto me**)
- The "wedding ceremony" did not require clergy; only 2 adult male witnesses. The "**liturgy**" was the man saying, "H'ray aht m'kudeshet li." (**Behold thou art consecrated unto me**) by one of these means.

When I asked him about the length of time for the duration of a marriage or festival celebrations, he shared this: Any happy occasion was a time for celebration, but we can only infer things such as duration, unless

specifically mentioned in Scripture. For example, look at the first chapter of the OT book of Esther.

From this we gather that a mishteh, a banquet of wine, could go on for a long time in the time of the Persian Empire that followed the Babylonian era.

## **PEACE** - Healing the Official's Son

John 4:46-54 Jesus returned to the city of Cana in Galilee, where he had changed water into wine. **A government official was in Cana.** His son was sick in Capernaum. 47 The official heard that Jesus had returned from Judea to Galilee. So he went to Jesus and asked him to go to Capernaum with him to heal his son who was about to die.

48 Jesus told the official, **“If people don’t see miracles and amazing things, they won’t believe.”**

49 The official said to him, **“Sir, come with me before my little boy dies.”**

50 Jesus told him, **“Go home. Your son will live.”** The man believed what Jesus told him and left.

51 While the official was on his way to Capernaum, his servants met him and told him that his boy was alive. 52 **The official asked them at what time his son got better.** His servants told him, “The fever left him yesterday evening at seven o’clock.” 53 **Then the boy’s father realized that it was the same time that Jesus had told him, “Your son will live.”** So the official and his entire family became believers.

54 This was **the second sign** that Jesus performed after he had come back from Judea to Galilee.

## **PATIENCE** - The Samaritan Woman at the Well

A long story that most of us are familiar with but basically a story that shows the patient grace and compassion of God for a variety of religious understandings. Jesus speaks as a Jew and a Rabbi, but he does not

denigrate the woman nor her faith. Jesus simply conveys the magnitude of God's great love and compassion for everyone - so much so that she brings back a crowd from her town to hear his message.

When we truly accept this incomprehensible message about love for ourselves we live better and we share more.

Jesus was clearly not sent to condemn the world and the people in it, but to share the wonder of the fact that "God loved the world" more than anyone can know. With this magnificent gift, when we truly realize that we have it, we have the freedom to share it with others in every way we can.

This is the message of our Bishop, Michael Curry, when he urges "Come With Me To Galilee" and it is the message of Jesus, the anointed one, who asks us to "love one another" as he has demonstrated, in word and action, how much we are loved by God.

May the caring peace of God that goes beyond human comprehension, declare God's love for you in your heart and mind as we see it in Jesus Christ; and may the blessing of God, loving Creator, gracious Liberator, and life giving Spirit keep you steadfast now and always.

AMEN.