

Inviting Jesus To The Kirk

John 2:1-11

Bryn MacPhail / Jan. 23, 2011

There are so many good reasons to attend a Sunday service; there are so many noble reasons for joining a local congregation, and yet I fear that it is possible to miss, or to neglect, our main reason for coming: *Jesus Christ*.

I don't think it is enough to say that our gathering is occasioned by Christ, He must be *the substance* of our gathering—He must be *the centerpiece* of everything that takes place within these walls.

The truth is, we can find other venues to make friends. We can find other venues to express our ethical values. And we can find other venues to enrich our children's lives.

We don't even need church in order to observe a lovely ceremony or to enjoy beautiful music. But *we do need the church if we are to engage Jesus Christ according to God's design*.

What is unique about our gathering is *the emphasis we place on Jesus*.

And, I reckon that, where such an emphasis is lacking, we would quickly descend into being less than what God has called the church to be.

If I were to ask you this morning, 'Do you desire St. Andrew's Kirk to be blessed by God?', I'd like to think that all of you would answer in the affirmative.

This should lead us to some follow-up questions: How do we access God's blessing? Are there some things we need to do, are there some things we need to avoid, in order to experience God's ongoing favour?

I submit to you that the answers to these questions are found in this morning's text.

The setting is a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and **the mother of Jesus was there; and Jesus was also invited, and His disciples, to the wedding (2:2).**

We note, first of all that Jesus was invited to a wedding—not as the local cleric, not in any official capacity, but *Jesus is invited as a guest*.

The role of Jesus changes, however, when one of the worst things imaginable happens at the reception: *they run out of wine!*

The mother of Jesus, presumably familiar with the special abilities of her child, commissions her son to remedy the problem.

It appears in our English translation that Jesus is responding harshly to His mother, but His words are not harsh sounding in the original Greek.

This would explain why Jesus ultimately complied. Jesus was reluctant, to be sure, but He nonetheless proceeds to turn water into wine.

From this account we are able to glean *three principles* for our edification.

- 1) Invite Jesus to the party.
- 2) Secondly, whatever Jesus says to do, do it.
- 3) And thirdly, expect great blessing when the instructions of Jesus are followed.

First, *we must invite Jesus to the party*. If Jesus is not present, the problem cannot be remedied. Unless Jesus is in attendance, adversity cannot be transformed into blessing.

This principle can be applied to our lives in a variety of ways. You will note that our sermon title applies this principle specifically to our congregation. In order for our congregation to be what it ought to be, in order for our congregation to accomplish what God has ordained for us, we must be sure to invite Jesus into our midst.

I do not mean to suggest that He hasn't been here before, nor do I mean to imply that He is not here now. What I do want to communicate, however, is that *we must guard against taking the presence of Jesus for granted*.

The Bible is filled with examples of God removing His blessing, even disciplining His people, because they forgot Him and ceased serving Him for a season.

In other words, our physical gathering does not guarantee the blessing of Christ. The fact that we are in a church building, and that we have a cross on the wall, and a Bible open on the lectern is no guarantee that God will bless the people and ministry of St. Andrew's Kirk.

King David learned this principle, noting in Psalm 51, “**(Lord), You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; You are not pleased with burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise**” (Ps. 51:16, 17).

Now, keep in mind, that the practices referenced by David were actually ordained by God. Just as God requires that we gather here for corporate worship, He required of the Israelites burnt offerings.

But David soon learned that *God is not nearly as concerned with what is taking place on the outside, as He is concerned with what is taking place on the inside.*

Our Saviour does not delight so much in the condition of our sanctuary, or in the ordering of our service, as He delights in the condition, and ordering, of our *hearts*.

Our hearts need to be engaged in what we are doing here. Not simply with the words that come from our lips, but with the utterances that

spring from our hearts we must make certain that we invite Jesus to St. Andrew's.

Having our hearts engaged, as we invite Jesus to the Kirk, we turn to the second principle found in our text: ***Whatever (Jesus) says to you, do it*** (Jn. 2:5).

This is a remarkable statement that Mary utters to the wedding servants. Indeed, this is a challenging exhortation if we apply it to ourselves: *Whatever Jesus says to you, do it.*

Isn't it true that our ability to comply with instruction will be related to our capacity to trust the person instructing us?

'Whatever your enemy says to you, do it?' Not a chance!

'Whatever a stranger says to you, do it?' I don't think so.

'Whatever your fellow church member says to you, do it?' I'd rather not.

Even if we applied this principle to those we love most—how many of us could say, 'Whatever my spouse requires, I will do it'? Or, 'Whatever my mother requires, I will do it'? Even with those whom we love, this is a difficult command.

And yet, the principle found before us is unequivocal: *Whatever Jesus says to you, do it.*

Do you see the level of trust that is required? Imagine the mindset of the servants that day, ‘Who is this guy and why should we listen to him?’

Jesus commands them, “**Fill the waterpots with water.**” ‘Water? What’s this guy thinking? Someone explain to the man that we need WINE—not water!’

If this was the mindset of the servants, we’ll never know. We’re simply told that they trusted and yielded to Jesus’ instruction. Though they did not see a connection between the water supply and the wine shortage, they did what they were told. They proceeded to fill six stone waterpots with water.

Friends, as we look to the Scriptures, we too may be confronted by instruction from our Lord that does not immediately make sense to us. We may not see the reason for the command, but we trust that there is a reason for it—a good reason.

Like those who have gone before us, we need to trust that Jesus knows better than we do. Believing this, we comply: *whatever Jesus says to us, we do.*

This principle not only requires our *trust*, but it also requires our *thoroughness*. There are no loopholes with this principle; there are no short cuts, and no exceptions. The commands of Jesus are not like a buffet table, where we take what we like, and leave behind what we dislike—*whatever Jesus says to you, do it.*

The thoroughness required for this principle also relates to its scope. In whatever context you find yourselves, this principle applies.

Whether you are participating in a ministry at the Kirk, whether you are busy at your workplace, or whether you are relating to members of your family, this principle is relevant—whatever Jesus says to you, do it.

Leave no realm of your life untouched by this principle. Bring it to bear on your household, bring it bear on your finances, your community involvement, and your relation to this congregation—whatever Jesus says to you, do it.

Doing what Jesus says requires our *trust*, it requires our *thoroughness*, and it also requires our *immediacy*. Once you discern that Jesus has something for you to do, it is unwise to delay.

This is a particular temptation for Presbyterians. My experience tells me that we tend to over think things. My experience has been that there are occasions when our response should simply be ‘Yes Lord’, but instead the response we have opted for is to create another committee.

This is not what we find in our text. We do not see the servants seeking permission from their supervisor. They do not seek permission from the headwaiter or the bridegroom. There is no indication that they took a poll amongst themselves. Jesus told them to do something and so they did it—immediately.

I confess that this requirement poses a particular challenge for me. I do not like to move quickly.

I am quite cautious, by nature. Ask Allie—I often collect and compare product brochures for a year or more before making a substantial purchase.

But again, the testimony of Scripture confronts me, and it confronts you—where Jesus has clearly commanded something, it is not prudent to debate or to delay.

Whatever Jesus says to you, do it—requires our *trust*, it requires our *thoroughness*, it requires our *immediacy*, and it requires our *zeal*.

It may be a small thing to point out, but I find it interesting that John records that the servants filled the waterpots up to the brim (Jn. 2:7).

There are different ways of filling up a waterpot. I have a relative who, when you pour him a drink, frequently comments, ‘Is there something wrong with the top half of my glass?’

These servants not only obeyed the instruction of Jesus, but they did so to capacity.

And so should it be with us. If we are commanded to love the Lord, let us do that with all our might (Mk. 12:30).

If we are commanded to preach the gospel, let us do that when it is in season and when it is out of season (2Tim. 4:2).

If we are commanded to pray, let us do that without ceasing (1Thess. 5:17).

You see, the Bible is replete with ‘fill it to the brim’ examples. Let us resolve then to carry out the instructions of Jesus with *zeal*.

What then shall we expect to happen? If we engage Jesus with our hearts and invite Him to every gathering, if we do what He says with trust, thoroughness, immediacy, and zeal, what can we reasonably expect to be the result?

Based on what I observe in the passage before us, we can expect to receive from Jesus *an abundance of blessings*. Moreover, the blessings we receive from Jesus will be of the highest quality.

John reports that Jesus made between 120 and 180 gallons of wine! More than sufficient quantity, wouldn't you say?

Here we discern that we worship a most generous God! We worship One who, not only supplies necessities, but delights in giving in abundance—in heaping grace upon grace.

Now consider this: If Jesus would provide so lavishly for this temporal void, how much more will He provide for the deepest needs of our soul!

The gifts of Jesus are not in limited supply, nor are they stunted. The gifts of Jesus are neither small in quantity nor in quality.

Did you notice what kind of wine Jesus produced? It was not the watered down version that the people of the ancient world were accustomed to, but rather, the headwaiter refers to it as “**the good wine**” (Jn. 2:10). It was the best kind of wine!

Imagine being the recipient of God’s favour. Imagine blessing being heaped upon blessing. Imagine God favouring and prospering St. Andrew’s Kirk. Imagine the Kirk becoming the effective arm of the Lord in this community.

It can be this way.

Invite Jesus wherever you gather and whatever Jesus says to you, do it.

Yield to Jesus and the One who produced an abundance of fine wine, will also bless you and supply all your needs according to His riches and glory (Phil. 4:19). Amen.