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The Second Sunday after the Epiphany  
20 January 2013  
Grace-Trinity Lutheran Churches, Wichita  
Jn 2:1-11

*In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit*

What do you do when God seems to hate you?

We do real well talking about all the wonderful Gospel promises that come from His divine lips,  
but what about His rebukes, His curses, His *No!*

What then?

Do you give up?

Do you ditch this God for one that might listen to you?

Who might give you what you want and who always treats you as you feel you deserve?

It isn't hard to imagine someone leaving the Christian faith.

It happens all the time.

Things aren't so successful in the Church.

Remember it's a bunch of sinners that fill the pews, that vote on the councils, and that pay the salaries.

And what happens when a sinner gets told 'no'?

They fight or they flee.

So what about you, O Sinner?

What do you do when God tells you "No!"?

Be honest for a minute, you know it's true.

You know it bothers you when you don't get what you've prayed for.

(And I don't mean simply that you got jipped on the pony you wanted.)

I mean He didn't heal your son who was dying.

He didn't save your sister.

Your dad was just diagnosed with three bouts of cancer at the same time—

what kind of God does that.

It's these sorts of prayers, which God tells us to pray, that when they go unanswered,  
we all wonder if it's real.

And if it's real, we start to wonder if God is our enemy.

We feel betrayed by Him,

like He doesn't care, or that our pain isn't so important.

Where's the mercy when it's needed?

Why is God silent?

Why do You hate me, God?

We're not alone in being rebuked by God.  
It happened to Mary too.

It seems a simple request:

**"They have no wine."** (2:3)

But Jesus answered,

**"Woman, what does this have to do with me?"** (Jn 2:4).

It was a request for joy and abundance,  
but Jesus responded with a cold "No."

Can God really do that?  
Doesn't He always give us what we want?  
Can He talk to us like that?

Yes He can; He's God.  
That's what Epiphany is all about, reminding you that this Jesus is God Himself.

Sometimes it's hard to remember.  
What sort of God lives and moves as a helpless infant?  
What God drinks His mother's milk?  
What God enters the muck and filth of the Jordan for a sinners baptism?

It's also hard to remember that Jesus is God because we have softened His edges.  
We've tamed Him to our liking—  
making Him more a friend or a buddy than the Incarnate God.

The Jesus we like is the Jesus who doesn't care all that much if you're in church on Sunday.  
He doesn't get too bothered by the grudge you hold, or the pot you smoke, or the monthly fling.  
He's happy with your two-buck offering and the \$3000 tv at home.

That's the Jesus we like.  
Who tells us how good we are, and appreciates our trying, and isn't offensive.

Repent.

That's no Jesus at all—"What does this have to do with Me?", He might say.

Jesus says "no," because He's God.  
And God can always say "no."  
He's not bound by what you want or what you think is best.

But what is this God like who says "no"?  
Mary helps us here.

Look how she responds to His rebuke.  
 She doesn't try to make things right, or run away,  
 she simply says to the servants, "**Do whatever He tells you.**"

She takes His "no" by faith.  
 She trusts that the God who says 'No' is the God who saves.  
 She believes what the Angel has said to her.  
 She believes the promises of the shepherds.  
 She believes the worship and the offerings of the Magi.  
 Mary believes.

Though her feelings might be hurt,  
 and her pride smashed,  
 and her sadness great,  
 she believes that this Jesus is who God has said He is.  
 She asked; she prayed.  
 God said *no*.  
 And she still trusted Him to do what is right and good and for the blessing of all.

She trusted Him to be God even in her shame and her suffering.  
 And we must do the same!

When God answers our prayers with a "No",  
 and when our suffering piles on,  
 and when our lives overwhelm us,  
 let us remember who this Jesus is as true God for us.

Every "No," every bit of suffering, every cross we bear has two sides:  
 on the one hand, God tests us, strengthening our faith through it;  
 on the other hand, Satan tempts us away from the faith.

While we suffer we can't distinguish the two—  
 we can't see a difference, the pain is too great, nothing about it seems good.  
 Yet faith is trusting God to be God *for us!*  
 His miracle at Cana is proof of this—as John says, the first of His signs. (2:11)  
 It's here that His glory is revealed, that prayers are answered—even though a "No" was spoken.

What's more, Jesus answered Mary's prayer better and more and fuller than she'd ever expect!  
 The wine was more abundant than any party could handle,  
 the taste was richer than what the host served first,  
 the price was free, the work was little, and it all happened by His word.  
 He can do that—He's God.  
 The God who turned water into wine also turns wine into blood,  
 and sinners into saints, and enemies of God into friends and sons and heirs of Life itself.  
 And He does it all again today, just for you.

*In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit*