

Signs....signs....everywhere are signs....road signs, stop signs, yield signs, caution signs, business signs, storefront sandwich board signs, and, my favourite ones, church signs. Many are funny, some quirky, but they all convey a message.

When my husband, Dan, and I drive down to Belleville, we travel through Stirling, and on the Frankford Road corner is a church which usually displays some wonderful and thoughtful little gems of wisdom on its sign. I recall, in particular, "*Tomorrow's forecast: God reigns and the sun shines*"; "*Come as you are; you can change inside*"; "*Not all storms come to disrupt. Some clear your path*"; and "*God recycles. He made you from dust.*"



With the onset of COVID-19, new signs around the country reflected pandemic changes and were posted on Facebook and other social media platforms to share with readers such as, "*Social distancing does not apply to God; draw near to him*"; "*Jesus can wash away your sin, but you still have to wash your hands*"; and "*Services cancelled. God making house calls.*"

When churches reopened to in-person worship, signs such as "*Jesus cleans the heart; we disinfect the pews*" appeared. One church in New Orleans got very creative with its social distance seating placement and included scripture: "*I have prepared a place for you....just not in this pew*" and "*You will find me when you seek me – just not in this pew. Keep seeking*" and "*Zacchaeus climbed a tree. This pew is not it.*"

And now, the signs of the pandemic have reverted to online worship: "*Building closed. God is at work*" and "*We're closed but God is always open.*" Here we sit this morning in front of our PCs, laptops, tablets, and phones.

John's Gospel is full of signs; he, in fact, refers to Jesus' acts of miracles as *signs*, and in today's passage he presents the first of the seven signs. (v11)  
This miracle doesn't seem to be as significant as the later miracles in John's Gospel: for example, in Chapter 4 Jesus heals an official's son (v46-54), in Chapter 5, he heals a paralyzed man at the pool in Bethesda in Jerusalem (v1-9); Jesus feeds the five thousand (v1-14) in Chapter 6 and walks on water (v15-21); later, he heals a man who was born blind (9:1-34) and raises Lazarus from the dead (11:38-44).

According to Max Lucado, "John wrote down these miracles not to impress us but to urge us to believe in the presence of Christ. As he stated, "These [stories] are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name." (*"How Jesus Cares for You"* by Max Lucado, undated from [blog churchsource.com](http://blog.churchsource.com))

The Wedding at Cana is probably the most well-known of Jesus's miracles and it sets the theme of John's narrative, how Christ showed us his compassion, grace, and love.

According to Dr. David Lose:

"Jesus doesn't only attend the wedding, but he saves the day, turning water into wine when the wine had run out. Why?

Perhaps the key is a line from John's Prologue [in Chapter 1]...There John writes, "From his fullness, we have all received grace upon grace." (1:16) Not just grace...but grace upon grace. An abundance of grace in other words.

And that's the case here, as well. To run out of wine at a first century wedding would not have been just embarrassing, but disastrous. Wine was associated with blessing, joy, goodness, and more. To run out of wine would have felt like a curse, like you'd run out of blessing. And Jesus doesn't just offer enough wine to cover the balance, but turns six [stone water jars] into wine, providing more wine – and blessing – than they could have possibly consumed. More than that, and as the steward acknowledges, it's the best wine they've had.

Jesus...creates abundance. Wine upon wine, blessing upon blessing, joy upon joy, and grace upon grace.”  
(January 15, 2015...in the Meantime, davidlose.net)

As John wrote, this was the first of many signs Jesus used to help the disciples, the people to believe in His mission, His purpose on earth. Just as Jesus changed water into wine, He came to change people, to make them pure and holy, acceptable to God. And those signs of God’s presence which changes and redeems us are still with us, water, bread, wine, the Word; people, a handshake, a hug, a smile, a forgiving embrace all are signs of God’s presence with us as He continues to show us signs of His love.

As Jesus is the sign of God’s love in this world, He asks us to do likewise. The pandemic has changed us. I believe we are more compassionate, more patient, more giving, more loving. There are signs all around us of people reaching out to another with the sign of God’s love.

And, in closing, one last church sign to share: “A world of love makes a world of difference.”

Amen

Referenced material:

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- “Jesus’ First Miracle” by Jonathan Kruschel, February 20, 2019m sermoncentral.com
- “Jesus, the Wedding Guest” by Max Lucado, March 27, 2014, faithgateway.com
- “Water to Wine” by Ray C. Stedman, May 1, 1983, Authentic Christianity, raystedman.org
- “Wedding at Cana: Commentary on John 2:1-11” by Gilberto Ruiz, January 12, 2014, workingpreacher.org
- Sermons based on John 2:1-11, sermoncentral.com
- Sermons based on John 2:1-11, textweek.com

*A personal pondering:*

- “Wine Time, A Sermon on John 2:1-11” by Fr. Michael K. Marsh, January 20, 2013  
<https://interruptingthesilence.com/2013/01/20/wine-time-a-sermon-on-john-21-11/>
- ...and the song that I couldn’t stop singing when I began my introduction...<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c9lh7lqZojc>

