

## IN VINO VERITAS

If you were God what would your first miracle be? How would you introduce yourself to the world? Would you level a mountain or cause the earth to shake? Would you stop a war or would you cause one? Would you rid the world of mean people or ignorant people or bad people? Would you solve world hunger or make everyone filthy rich? Hard to say, right, but it's fun to think about such a hypothetical scenario. What's even more enjoyable to think about is why Jesus chose the miracle at Cana to be his first miracle on earth. Of all the things He could have done, He chose to change water into wine. Why? It seems so...blah, so pedantic, so anticlimactic. At a glance, Jesus' first miracle was nothing more than some ancient version of a beer run. The guests were parched. The wine had run out. Jesus satisfied the guests by changing barrels of water into wine. Kind of boring, really. Worse still, this was a "who cares!" kind of wedding. The miracle wasn't done for Caesar or some high-ranking government official, he did it for nobodies. We don't even know the couple's names, for goodness' sake.

As with everything Jesus does, there's always more to it than first meets the eyes. For I assure you God didn't waste His opportunity to do something remarkable for His first miracle. To understand the why I want to give new meaning to an old Latin phrase: *In vino veritas*, "The truth is in the wine". For to understand the significance of the wine is to understand the truth behind Christ's actions this morning. The whole miracle hinges on the importance of wine to God's story of salvation. The wedding venue provided the medium for God to reveal Himself upon the scene of history. And Christ enters history by recalling history for this transformation of water into wine determines the very nature of Christ's breakthrough in time. What is sometimes missed on us is how often the motif of the abundance of wine occurs throughout the Old Testament. We hear prophet after prophet predict the coming Messianic Kingdom in terms of an overflow of wine. Whether it's the prophet Isaiah describing the Coming Age as a choice wine, or the prophet Joel speaking of the mountains dripping with sweet wine or the prophet

Amos declaring God's blessings will be poured out like wine, wine occupies a central place in the prophetic visions of the renewed Kingdom of the Messiah. The coming Messiah would usher in a time of prosperity, a time of rejoicing, a time of celebration, and wine itself would mark the occasion. So, you see, Christ introduces Himself to the world by performing a miracle that identified Himself as the very Messiah so long foretold. He transforms water into wine, but He does so much more than that. He transforms hope into fulfillment. Expectation becomes reality. In the person of Christ, a new era was ushered in, a new age dawned, the former things passed away and something new sprung forth. The Psalmist tells us "The Lord gives us wine to make our hearts glad". If Christ is the new wine of the new creation, then this passage takes on a whole new meaning for us. *In vino veritas*, for Truth is quite literally in the wine. Christ, the very Truth of God, pours Himself out like a drink offering upon this altar in the Lord's Supper, and we imbibe the joys of the new creation.

But what is it about wine that makes it the drink of choice for God's new creation? I think we can venture a guess by simply thinking about the act of winemaking. Nature often destroys with one hand while creating with the other. We see this most clearly in the conversion of grapes into wine. Wine then is a mirror held up to nature. The process of winemaking is a creative destruction, a destructive creation, a result of breaking wholes into parts and integrating parts into wholes. The grapes are broken, but in their brokenness, there is a newfound wholeness. The grapes lose their original form, but in the great renewal they pass from one form to another. In a manner of speaking, the individual grapes are still there, but somehow, they're not. They are the same, but yet they're so much more. What occurs in nature according to unconscious processes, God brings about deliberately and intentionally for His chosen people. For we confess that we too pass from one form to another. The whole story of Christianity is a movement from death to life, from sin to forgiveness, from old to new. Creatively destroyed in our Baptisms as we pass with Christ through His suffering and death; destructively created as we share in His resurrection and are

raised to new life with Him. One becomes many. Like the grapes themselves, we as individuals are broken by God, shattered into pieces by His righteous Law. The many become one as we are reconfigured into living members of Christ's living body; moving parts integrated into the whole. If you think about it, nothing really ever perishes in the universe. Everything varies, adjusts, and renews its form. In the beauty of the new creation, we are different, but the same. We are still us, but somehow, we are so much more. We are still us, yes, but we are more ourselves now than ever before through this process of transformation, renewal and growth. What God has begun in us He will bring to completion on the Last Day. What is happening in this present moment will continue until Christ comes again. Like a fine wine, we get better with age. Our faith increases as our lives merge and interlock with the life of God. For now, we know only partially, but soon, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, we will know fully who we were always meant to be. This is the miracle, and the Truth of it is in the wine. Amen.

In Christ,

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