

What did you learn in church today, Cindy?

I learned all about a party where the wine ran out and Jesus gave them 180 gallons of wine more. There sure must have been a lot of people who got drunk that day.

Now if you were a mother or father who sent your child to Sunday School and she came home with that story would you send her back the next week?

Wine, abundant fine wine. In a classy restuarant it speaks of luxury. A waiter with towel over arm, every movement choreographed.

Wine. I remember the hermit, <sup>Jesus John</sup> who lived in a little shack in the middle of a woods near our house. Every day he walked up to the Park Avery grocery store to buy a bottle of wine, his food for the day. When we shot pigeons in our barn we gave their still warm bodies to him, he'd eat them. But mostly his life was about wine.

Wine and a wedding feast

The first wedding feast I remember was a a VFW Hall - one of my cousins had gotten married. There was lots of drinking going on - I was too young to notice what they were drinking though I suspect a lot more gallons of beer than of wine were consumed. I remember an argument - the loud shouting - even some scuffling. I learned my first lesson about wedding feasts and families and drinking.

Jesus went to a wedding, but as I think of the story I never place him in the banquet hall, eating and drinking with the guests. I always think of him out in the kitchen where the servants are, he and his disciples and his mother. The wine runs out. Maybe you've been there.

I remember a funeral dinner in my last parish. We expected fifty for lunch - a hundred showed

up. Panic.

Someone was sent to the grocery store for cans of beans. I can still see those large bowls filled with cold Van Camps Pork and Beans that we set out before the guests.

There is no more wine. Wherever she was Mary heard and told Jesus, "They have no wine." And though it sounded at first like he was not going to help - soon the six jars, each containing between twenty and thirty gallons had been filled, and the steward was tasting the water now turned into wine.

What can we make of this? They probably did not need more wine that day. Not in the way a blind man needed sight, or a father needed his daughter raised from the dead, or a person possessed by demons needed to be set free. But maybe there is more here than meets the eye.

Long ago Isaiah announced: On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well aged wines strained clear. And he will destroy on this mountain the shroud that is cast over all peoples, the sheet that is spread over all nations; he will swallow up death forever. Then the lord God will wipe away all tears from all faces and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth. It will be said on that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us. This is the Lord for whom we have waited; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

Is The promised feast about to begin? Soon they will be gathered on a hillside, thousands, and the food will be abundant, bread and fish - baskets left over.

Is the promised feast about to begin?

Will they soon be confessing This is our God we have waited for him, so that he might save us?

Is the promised feast about to begin?

Is he about to swallow death forever?

Before long they will be offering Jesus wine, cheap wine. Wine on a sponge lifted to his lips with a stick.

And death will swallow him. Gulp him down just like every other one. Maybe his friends got drunk that night. Not the drinking of a wedding feast, full of hope and laughter, but the drinking of despair, sorrow, disappointment.

He will swallow up death forever.

Has death swallowed him, or has he swallowed death?

Answer that question and all your days and deeds will be directed.

If death swallowed him then eat and drink and be merry for tomorrow we die.

But if he swallowed death, then the finest wine in all the world is served at this table. Wine that brings joy that never ends is served at this table. Jesus own life is offered for you at this table.

If he swallowed death then life is yours to take into all the world, ~~you are sent to infect the world with his life.~~ *You will be Gods hand wiping away the tears - Gods hand spreading a feast for the hungry, Gods hand leading the thirsty to Jesus.*