

Sermon Epiphany 2c 2022 – People Matter to God and They Can Matter to Us

Introduction: People Matter to God

Today is the second Sunday in the season of Epiphany in the year of *Faith Matters*;

The second Sunday in a season of learning about the faith and particularly who Jesus is;

Through Gospel lessons and sermons that seek to reveal the face of God;

The God who has come into the world as a miracle worker;

As a healer, a teacher; as a person of forgiveness and grace;

As a God who welcomes everyone into God's presence.

And this Sunday we turn to one of the most famous miracles of Jesus' ministry;

Jesus turning water into wine and the power He reveals to change circumstances

So that a wedding banquet is not ruined and the party can go on.

It's a story often read at weddings and when couples renew their marriage vows;

After all, it takes place at a wedding and it's always a good idea to have Jesus there

And always important to remember that God's transforming power comes to us

When the wine gives out or when times are hard and we are struggling in our lives.

Scholars have written extensively about the subtleties and symbolism in the story;

How it happens on the third day – like the resurrection;

Or how the water might represent baptism and the wine communion;

How the wedding feast promises another feast for all of us one day in heaven;

And, most importantly, that we're talking about God in human form when we see Jesus.

These are important insights of this rich and memorable story

But what catches me up in this Sunday's Gospel what I couldn't get passed, is the 2nd line

“Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding.”

Jesus was invited to the wedding and the reception and He went;

Now I know for a lot of us who know something about parties and social occasions;
This detail may not seem all that important.

But in terms of knowing who Jesus is, this is an important piece of information;
It tells us that Jesus isn't stiff; that people liked Him; they wanted Him at the party
That maybe Jesus was not always solemn, that maybe He laughed,
And danced and had a glass of wine now and then;
Jesus is invited to the party and Jesus goes.

Now a wedding is always an important occasion and no less so in Jesus' day;
But I think the reason I couldn't get past this second line in this Gospel
Is because it reveals something that's crucial to our lives with God;
Something that's foundational: Jesus is interested in people's lives;
People matter to Jesus; people matter to God.

So Jesus attends a wedding, enjoys the feast;
And when called upon to make sure that things go well
Jesus saves the day by turning water into wine and His followers believe in Him;
Because He is a Lord who is interested in people's lives, including theirs.

People matter to God, all people;
The story we heard today and all the stories we'll hear through the coming weeks
Reveal the Jesus who has the power of God to heal and teach and forgive
But not just in a general or theoretical way – but personally;
The healings, the teachings, the grace all affect individual people's lives
And reveal the face of the God who cares, the God who is interested,
The God who wants to be involved with us and who is willing, when we invite Him in
To change our circumstances and bring us life.

You Matter to God

People matter to God and so that this promise doesn't remain just a nice idea

Allow me to remind you or to tell you for the first time that you matter to God;
God cares deeply about what happens to you and to me today and every day;
This Christian life, this life with God is not imaginary, it's real.

It's the grace-filled reality that a young child touched on

As she struggled with learning the Lord's Prayer and prayed,
"Our Father, who art in heaven, how'd you know my name?"

God knows your name and is interested in how you're doing today

In how your job or schoolwork or retirement is going;
In how your relationships with family and friends are working out;
In what concerns you in the dark of the night;
In how you are making it through this pandemic.

As I listen to people talk about God, I get the impression so often

That they think God is like the leader of some big business
Or the president of some major university or institution
Interested in us as part of the whole, in a general way,
But distant and apart from our personal needs and hopes.

One of my longtime friends here spent years telling me that God started everything out;

But that God had given us brains and hands and feet;
Expecting us to take care of our lives and take care of things;
Because God was too busy elsewhere.

But the promise of God, the promise of the Christian faith we glimpse at the wedding feast

Is a God who is intimately involved with your life and mine;
The God who creates and sustains all that is;

And yet cares for each of us in personal and tangible ways;
Even attending and rescuing one couple's wedding.

And when we invite God to come into our lives
Some wonderful and even miraculous things start to happen;
And we come to know that we do matter to God.

Some of you know what I'm talking about because you've had those moments
When you've been touched by God; when you have known God's grace;
When you've felt God's forgiveness and experienced God's presence;
When the coincidences of your life are so amazing
That you know that God has been with you;
Others of us can expect those moments as we invite God into our lives.

People matter to God; You and I matter to God, personally;
And when we invite God to come into our lives;
God comes and the water of our lives is transformed.

Since People Matter to God, People Matter to You and Me

As people who matter to God, we are promised a living relationship with God;
A relationship that brings life; that brings forgiveness and grace;
A relationship that promises transformation;
A relationship that is grounded in love.

And since people matter to God, since you and I matter to God,
Then people matter to us.

We've been teaching confirmation class online during this pandemic
And last week's class focused on the two great commandments:
Loving God and loving our neighbor as ourselves.

We spent a good bit of time talking about our outreach ministries here and abroad;
While the confirmands and their parents made casseroles for the feeding program.

As we were finishing up, we reminded all the families of the importance
Of participating in outreach and the positive effects that has for others and for us;
And we reminded them that their outreach, their love of neighbor
Also involved the people in their lives and school and work;
Who are looking for someone to love them
To let them know that they mattered.

I think I may have revealed that as a dork in middle school and high school;
Dorkier than I am right now;
It meant so much when someone smiled at me or said hello
Or sat with me at lunch or picked me for a team;
It made me feel like I mattered.

For just as we matter to God, so the people next to you matter, too;
Every great movement and renewal of God's Church and God's people;
Starts with someone recognizing that because people matter to God;
People matter to us.

Dr. King's leadership in the Civil Rights movement was based on the belief
That people matter to God, all people;
St. Teresa of Calcutta's works in the slums in India and now around the world;
Was based on the belief that people matter to God;
Our mission and ministry here, at St. David's;
Is based on the belief that people matter to God;
And so we serve and love them because of it.

Look around your life today and every day at the people in your life;
Some of them you know well; some you know only by name;
Some you know nothing about;
Like you, they matter to God and I want you to let them know they matter to you.

At the peace today, I want you to make sure you greet and text and start to know those near you;
Introduce yourself to those you may not know; admit it if you've forgotten their name;
Welcome someone who is new so that they know they matter to you
As they matter to God;
It's one of the great gifts of Christian community:
That we are freed to care for one another
And it starts right here in church.

We follow a Lord who promises to transform real people's lives;
We believe in a God who is ready and willing to be present with us day by day;
To offer us real life because people matter to God.

And so this morning I invite you to know in your heart of hearts that you matter to God;
Invite and allow God to enter more deeply into your life today and every day
And then live as though others matter to you as they matter to God
You may not see or experience miracles like the wedding at Cana;
But your life and the life of the world will be changed;
By our belief and our practice that people matter to God;
And so they matter to us.

Amen.