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Epiphany II – Year C
Isaiah 62.1-5
Psalm 36.5-10
I Cor. 12.1-11
John 2.1-11

In the name of the one, true, and living God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Signs are all around us. When we're riding in a car, we're constantly bombarded by signs telling us what to do: Stop. Do not enter. No right turn. Some of these signs we choose to obey, and others we don't. While we are riding along, we are also constantly bombarded by signs enticing us to buy. We see billboards on the side of the road advertising all sorts of destinations, eateries, and lodgings. We see signs in store fronts telling us of the lowest prices, the latest markdowns, and the greatest sales. Sometimes these signs get us to stop, sometimes they don't.

Then there are the signs that point to something that might not be quite obvious, or to things that have not happened yet but are about to happen. We speak of the first signs of spring: the robins chirping, the daffodils blooming. We speak of the first signs of Alzheimer's disease: the forgetfulness, the confusion. We speak of the sacraments as outward and visible signs of an inward and spiritual grace.

It's this kind of sign, the sign that points to something else, that St. John is talking about in today's Gospel. St. John tells us that, "Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him." Signs and glory. Signs and glory.

Some Biblical scholars divide St. John's Gospel into the Book of Signs and the Book of Glory. The signs, of course, are the miracles performed by Jesus: changing water into wine as we heard in today's Gospel, the healing of an official's son, the feeding of the five thousand. The glory, on the other hand, is the suffering, crucifixion, death, and resurrection of Jesus. That's right, in St. John's Gospel the glory of Jesus'

suffering, the glory of Jesus' crucifixion, and the glory of Jesus' death occur before the glory of the resurrection.

But we're not there yet. We've only seen signs for that road. For now we've been invited to a wedding in Cana. In our tradition, we say that the bride and groom are the ministers of the wedding. They are the ones who make vows to each other in the presence of us as witnesses and before God. At this wedding in Cana, we don't know who the bride and groom are. They're not named. In fact, with the exception of Jesus, no one in the story is named. Not the bride. Not the groom. Not the servants. Not the steward. Even Jesus' mother is not named. Mary is referred to only as the mother of Jesus, and Jesus refers to her as simply, "woman," not necessarily as a title of disrespect, but certainly not a title showing family relationship. Instead, the focus is on Jesus. The focus is on Jesus' first miracle, his first sign that will reveal his glory.

We don't know too much about the wedding. All we know is that the wine ran out a little early. At most weddings I've been to, this would be a real tragedy! So the mother of Jesus comments, as mothers will, that they have no wine. Maybe she was making a simple observation. Maybe she was being a bit judgmental. Maybe she was encouraging Jesus to perform a miracle. We don't know. All we know is that Jesus seems to become indignant and asks, "What concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come." That is to say, as St. John says elsewhere, Jesus' hour to be glorified has not yet come. Jesus' hour to be crucified has not yet come.

But the mother of Jesus, like most mothers, knows something. She tells the servants to do whatever Jesus tells them. So they do what Jesus says. They fill the Jewish purification jars with water and take them to the chief steward. The steward tastes the contents of the jars and we discover that the water has been turned into wine, wine that tastes even better than the original wine that was served. We discover that Jesus is the replacement for the older Jewish rites. We discover that Jesus performed

this miracle, this sign, to reveal his glory, and his disciples believed in him. In St. John's Gospel, signs are always related to believing.

But what about us? Do signs make us believe? Those traffic signs telling us what to do: we may obey them or not. Those advertising signs: we may buy what they promote or not. But those signs that point to something hidden, something about to happen: we wrestle with those. We pick at them until we discover the truth for ourselves. Does Jesus changing water into wine make us believe? Perhaps. Is it coincidence that the material of Jesus' first sign consists of water and wine, the very material of the Church's two great sacraments – Baptism and Eucharist – which, for us, are signs of God's grace? No, I don't think it's a coincidence.

But the ultimate question is what are all those signs pointing toward? The collection of Jesus' miracles. The extent of Jesus' ministry. The whole of Jesus' life. The glory of Jesus' suffering, crucifixion and death, and the triumph of his resurrection. These signs tell us that Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ, the Anointed One, God's only Son, God's "Word which became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory."

During this season of Epiphany, God is calling us to be signs of Christ's glory, signs pointing to Jesus' power and love. The imagery during Epiphany is that of light – light that can illumine and reveal Jesus' glory and power and purpose in the world for us and for all who believe. Today's collect states it beautifully: "Almighty God, whose Son our Savior Jesus Christ is the light of the world: Grant that thy [your] people, illumined by thy [your] Word and Sacraments, may shine with the radiance of Christ's glory, that he may be known, worshiped, and obeyed to the ends of the earth." So God is calling us to be lighted signs – lighted from within by God's Word and Sacraments; neon signs, if you will – flashing and pulsating brightly to call attention to the full life that is possible through Jesus Christ.

Just as Jesus is known by his signs, what are the signs in us by which Jesus can be recognized? What are the signs in our lives, individually and corporately, that reveal Jesus' glory so others may believe? Because we are lighted from within by God's Word and the Sacraments, a good place to look for these signs is in the Sacrament of Baptism and our Baptismal Covenant that we renewed last week as part of the celebration of the Feast of the Baptism of our Lord. In the Baptismal Covenant, after stating our belief in the Holy Trinity – God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit – we are asked a series of questions: Will we continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers? Will we persevere in resisting evil, and whenever we fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord? Will we proclaim by word and example the Good news of God in Christ? Will we seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbor as ourself? Will we strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being? These are all signs by which Jesus Christ can be recognized in our lives and which reveal his glory so others may believe.

The intended response to each question is, "I will, with God's help." But can we make this response? Remember the answer is not just "I will." We don't have to be signs on our own. That wouldn't reveal Jesus' glory, but only our own – if we could do it alone. No, the answer is "I will, with God's help." With God's help. It's a reminder that all things are possible with God.

And we have proof that fulfilling our Baptismal Covenant is possible with God. On this weekend when we celebrate the anniversary of the birth of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., we are reminded of how he fulfilled the Baptismal Covenant; how he proclaimed by word and example the Good News of God in Christ; how he sought and served Christ in all persons, loving his neighbor as himself; how he strove for justice and peace among all people, and respected the dignity of every human being. Through

his life of non-violence, his ministry of social action, and, yes, even his death, Dr. King was a sign pointing toward Jesus Christ and revealing his glory so others might believe.

We may say that Dr. King had exceptional gifts, that he was unique. But we are all unique. And, as St. Paul tells us in today's reading from his first letter to the Corinthians, we all have gifts: wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, prophecy, discernment, tongues, the interpretation of tongues. And it's important to remember the source of these gifts: "[T]here are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone."

God is calling us to use our variety of gifts as signs that point to Jesus Christ and reveal his glory so others may believe. So what's holding us back? Amen.