

## **5<sup>th</sup> Dimension**

Isaiah 62:1-5 & John 2:1-11

January 17, 2010 MLK Sunday

A couple weeks ago I mentioned M theory and its view of the cosmos wherein there are 11 dimensions.

Today I just want to talk about the 5<sup>th</sup> dimension and to get there we are going to go back to Cana.

So here is Jesus, he's at a wedding banquet and they run out of wine.

At the behest of his mother Jesus provides more wine – even though the guests are already drunk.

Turned water, into wine -- yeah – let's party. Party on dude!

This is proof that Jesus was the ultimate party animal.

What a gift to all the 'Animal Houses' of the world, a savior who can turn water into wine. You can hear the late John Belushi crying out, "We've been saved. Alleluia!"

Taken literally, Jesus should be the patron saint, or the messiah, to all the party animals in world.

But maybe there is some way besides, factually, literally, historically, that we should be interpreting this story.

There's another way of interpreting scripture?

Almost from the beginning of Christianity it was clear that there was a good deal of scripture that when taken literally stretched our imaginations and our sense of reality.

As far back as the year 400, St. Augustine of Hippo, one of the most revered Saints, Fathers of the Church and early theologians, came up with the “principle of accommodation” which would dominate how the Bible was interpreted for centuries; well into the early modern period.

So what is this  
“principle of accommodation?”

To start with Augustine believed that “God simply accommodated the truths of revelation to the science of the day so that the people of Israel could understand it.”

[p. 122, Armstrong, *A Case for God.*]

**This is really pretty common sense.**

**God can only reveal things to us within the paradigm or worldview that we have and can understand.**

**Talking Big Bang, quantum physics and relativity theory to the ancient Hebrews would not have gone very far.**

The second part of the principle was that, as our scientific understanding of the world improved, then whenever the literal meaning of scripture clashed with reliable scientific information, then science was to take precedence and the scripture should be either taken to be viewed as God's accommodation to a less enlightened people and/or the scripture should be interpreted allegorically. [p. 123]

This 'principle of accommodation' married well with a common understanding of scripture that existed for centuries that it was really the allegorical meaning of scripture, rather than a factual, literal reading, that really held the truth of the scripture.

And that was how scripture was interpreted for century after century after century, until the early modern period when science changed the paradigm through which people viewed the world and inadvertently changed how some people interpreted the scriptures.

One of the things that made the modern world, the modern world, was an insistence that the only things

that are true are those things that are measurable, historical, factual.

This brought a crisis to readers of the Bible.

If these events as recorded in the Bible that stretch our sense of reality aren't historically factual, then they can't be true.

And that was unacceptable.

It was this crisis that finally led to what we now call fundamentalism and the insistence that the scriptures are inerrant and must be taken as factually, historically literal and that it is science that is in error.

That was one response, the other response, as taken by most mainline, old line denominations, like us, and even the Catholic church, was to recognize, as did Augustine, that the truth was not found in the historical facts, but in the mythos, the underlying truth to which the biblical stories pointed.

**So now let us go back to the wedding at Cana.**

If we're not going to interpret the story as historically literal and revel in Jesus as one crazy wild party animal, then how might we interpret this passage?

Well, let's see what other significant references to weddings are made in the scriptures.

**We read a very important one this morning from Isaiah, the metaphor of God's marriage to Israel.**

**Another very important metaphor is the marriage of Christ to the Church.**

**And an equally important mention is the parable of the Wedding Banquet.**

You remember that parable Jesus told, where all the high status regulars are invited to the wedding banquet but they are just too, too, busy to attend.

So everybody, including those sorry folk you wouldn't want to be associated with, much less invite them into your home and eat with them; they all are invited into the banquet.

All of these allegories and parables point to the Realm of God and a fulfillment of God's will in that Realm.

In all these the deeper meaning is not found in the facts or historicity, but in the mythos, the underlying truth that these stories point to.

It is the same for John's story of the wedding at Cana

Even if the actual events, occurred, John isn't interested in the physical wine.

He was not celebrating a cheap way to get drunk, or that Jesus kept the party going.

John wants us to look for the mythos, the deeper, heart felt meaning of the event.

## **So, what might the deeper meaning of turning water into wine be?**

Is there a way that this wedding scene fits in with the other wedding scenes mentioned in the Bible?

Is there a way that this story from John also points us to the Realm of God?

**Is this John's way of displaying what Mark did in the beginning of his Gospel when Jesus enters Galilee and proclaims the good news telling everyone that the Kingdom, the Realm of God is at hand?**

**Just as we today view wine as a sacred element in communion, wine in the ancient world was viewed as a sacred gift of God. Wine is sacred.**

**Jesus took the mundane water and turned it into sacred wine.**

**Jesus took the mundane and made it sacred.**

**Jesus turns the mundane into the sacred and reveals that the Realm of God is at hand.**

**The sacred is here with us.**

**The Kingdom of God, God's realm is here. It's not in another world, it is here.**

**It's like a 5<sup>th</sup> dimension, the dimension of the sacred, the holy, the spiritual.**

**Along with width, depth, height, and Time/Space, there is a spiritual dimension.**

**We sense it. Jesus revealed it. Paul proclaimed it.**

**It is God's presence in all there is.**

The wedding at Cana, didn't reveal Jesus to be the ultimate party animal, it is the unveiling of Jesus as the one who reveals the presence of the sacred within the mundane.

The wedding banquet is the Gospel of John's version of Jesus' coming out party, turning the secular into the sacred, the mundane into the holy, revealing that the Realm of God is at hand.

So this affects us in a couple ways.

First, we can read scripture in our mundane 4 dimensions of width, depth, height within Space/time and we can get all the facts and read the literal, focusing of the historical and factual or we go deeper and find the truth by reading scripture in the 5<sup>th</sup> dimension and seeing the deeper meaning that the stories point to; but there's more.

But it is the second way it affects us that is the most profound.

What Jesus reveals to us in turning the mundane into the sacred is that we can begin to see the 5<sup>th</sup> dimension in all reality.

A couple weeks ago, Shelly and I went to go see the movie *Invictus*, that tells the story of Nelson Mandela's attempt to bring about a just society in the aftermath of the violence and injustice of apartheid rule in South Africa.

His vision, his understanding that forgiveness and love were necessary pre-requisites to bringing South Africa out of Apartheid and avoiding a genocide of the minority whites; that vision was a vision of the 5<sup>th</sup> dimension.

Hopefully, we don't need to spend nearly 30 years in prison, like Mandela did, in order to see the 5<sup>th</sup> dimension.

When Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "I have a dream," he was sharing with us what he had seen in the 5<sup>th</sup> dimension.

Rev. King's vision of love, forgiveness and justice came from seeing the Realm of God in our midst, in the 5<sup>th</sup> dimension.

King saw that in all we do, even in the most mundane, there is a sacred lure to justice, to love.

We too see the 5<sup>th</sup> dimension.

We sing a request to “open our eyes.”  
Open my eyes that I may see, glimpses of truth  
thou hast for me;  
Open my ears, that I may hear Voices of truth,  
thou sendest clear.  
Open my eyes, illumine me, Spirit divine!

Or we sing, “Open the eyes of my “heart.  
Open the eyes of my heart, Lord.  
I want to see You.

This is our desire to be able to see, to sense, to  
perceive the 5<sup>th</sup> dimension.

We know it is there, we have glimpses of it and  
sometimes more and we seek clarity in viewing  
it.

But you know what.

Just like those folk in the parable of the wedding  
banquet, we are so busy living in our 4 dimensional  
world, we just don't take the time, or invest the  
energy, to see the 5<sup>th</sup> dimension.

We just don't have time to go to the banquet.

Even when they are serving the best wine.

In this coming year, may we take time.

And so...

Up, up and a way to ...  
the 5<sup>th</sup> Dimension.

AMEN.