

**A Sermon for the Second Sunday after the Epiphany  
January 19, 2025**



**New Life Episcopal Church, Uniontown, OH**

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John 2:1-11

## The Real Miracle

Once upon a time I performed a wedding in a winery. The couple requested that the scripture be the wedding at Cana, the Gospel story we heard this morning. Their wedding itself was a celebration of change, not unlike changing water into wine, they said, as they celebrated their new life together.

As I think about this famous story, of Jesus enhancing the wedding celebration with a surprising transformation of beverages, I think the real miracle is not the wine. The real miracle is the marriage itself. Just think for a minute about your own marriages. You and your intended spouse came together from different walks of life, and you willingly joined together into a new family, a new life. You were probably quite young, not knowing what to expect, but you were stepping forth in love and confidence.

Our society promises us a fairytale romance, often citing famous fairytales like Cinderella, depicting marriage as something of a rescue from the unpleasantness of life, escape into an ideal. Our Episcopal marriage service and vows try to bring reality to the couple before they step off into wedded bliss. The couple is first asked to consent to the marriage, a leftover from medieval times when sometimes a marriage might have involved coercion. And then, during the marriage vows, each member of the couple promises to enter into the marriage for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health. All these promises to each other are also promises from life: you *will* experience better *and* worse, riches *and* poverty, sickness *and* health. The real miracle in a marriage is that we agree to all of that, and that we are made richer by all those experiences.

I'd like to tell you the story of a long and happy marriage. Jesus surely had a hand in this story of lives transformed. You may not know this couple, but you will surely recognize episodes from their marriage as similar to your own.

Ed and Carol met and married when she was 17 and he was 20. Their 67<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary was last week. Their long and fruitful marriage produced six children, who were reared over 18 years. When the youngest child entered elementary school, Carol was ready for something new. Carol was 35 at the time. A family meeting was called and she said she wanted to be a nurse. She wanted to assure everyone that she was still there for them, wife and mother, and so she would just take part-time classes. Her husband Ed said no, she should attend full time, saying she had stayed home with the children for 18 years and it was time for her to pursue her next calling. Carol says it was a family decision, all of them supporting her on her quest to become a registered nurse. And surely 18 years of devoted childcare figured into her compassionate nursing career

of 35 years. She spent most of her nursing career as an emergency room nurse, where her calm competency was a great asset to patients and staff alike.

One of my favorite stories about Carol involves this calm serenity. She claims she does not have a panic button. She was on the phone talking with a friend when Ed showed up, a child under each arm, announcing, "Get off the phone! The house is on fire!" Carol calmly said to her friend, "Anne, I have to go now. The house is on fire."

There would be events in their family life that may have seemed like a house on fire, but the family was sustained by their love for each other and their faith in God. The six children all married and had children, and their children had children, and at last count, Ed and Carol had 15 grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren and counting. Thanksgiving meals included 42 to 50 attending the feast. This past Thanksgiving Carol roasted four large turkeys. Everyone came, and there was one empty chair, for Ed, who had died on October 29, surrounded by his family. The last part of the marriage vows states, "To love and to cherish, until we are parted by death. This is my solemn vow." A vow that they both fulfilled.

So here is the miracle of our Gospel story, the miracle of two lives coming together, pledging to stay together no matter what, and facing all challenges together, including death. It is all a gift from God, in God's love of us, stating right from the beginning in Genesis (Gen 2:18), "It is not good for a human to be alone. I will make a helper as a partner." The blessing prayer for the marriage states so eloquently, "that God pour out the abundance of God's blessing upon the couple, defend them from every enemy, lead them into all peace, letting their love for each other be a seal upon their hearts, a mantle about their shoulders, and a crown upon their foreheads. Bless them in their work and their companionship, in their sleeping and in their waking, in their joys and in their sorrows, in their life and in their death... that they may faithfully live together in this life, and in the age to come have life everlasting"

Amen.