



October 11 – Mary

Like many others, I enjoy working on projects in our garage. I enjoy building things. I am not very good at it, and I know that practice is how you get there. Yet, the same thing happens every time I decide on a project. I read about it. I watch YouTube clips. I study the steps on how to accomplish the goal and I start to draft and redraft plans in my head. Sometimes, I will sit and look off at the wall while rethinking the project 15 different times.

The truth is, I get scared. I married into a family that is phenomenal at woodworking and building things. The finished products could be sold in stores. I get caught up on wanting to be at the same level that sometimes takes weeks before I actually start the project. Then, after I have started, I go into analysis paralysis any time something isn't quite turning out right. I spend so much time trying to make sure it is right that I could have built and rebuilt it 3-4 times in the time it took me to make 1.

The Gospel according to Saint John is the only one that tells this story. We tend to focus on the water and the wine. After all, it is the first miracle in this Gospel. Sometimes we focus so much on the miracle that we miss everything that is happening in this text. It comes after Jesus has called the first few of the disciples. They all go to this wedding, which would seem to suggest that this is the wedding of a family member.

Jesus is enjoying the wedding, while Mary is actively involved in hospitality. This would imply that the wedding is hosted by a member of Mary's family. She is so involved in hospitality that she is among the very first to notice that the wine is running out. This would bring great shame on the family. While Jesus is waiting for the perfect time to start his earthly ministry, Mary leans into faith.

We aren't really given an answer as to how long Jesus would have waited to feel ready to begin. His cousin sent his disciples with Jesus. He is assembling his group of disciples. But the response that Jesus gives Mary implies that Jesus is not ready yet. I picture him thinking through the drafts and redrafts of what all of this might look like. He is called to do this work, but what will it look like? Will he do it right? He wants to wait until he is ready. Mary leans on faith and does the thing that only a parent can do. She gives him a very public nudge to get started.

"Do whatever he tells you." That is all it takes. It is the kind of thing a parent says when they are tired of excuses and waiting for the right moment. She is teaching Jesus a valuable lesson, a lesson that is just as relevant today: Consistency is more important than perfection. It is not about waiting until Jesus may get everything perfect. It starts with showing up when there is a need. At face value, it seems like a pretty mundane use for the first miracle. He turned water into wine so that the wedding feast may continue.

The events that follow are all similar. He gets angry at the moneychangers in the temple and has a conversation with Nicodemus. Jesus starts showing up. These first chapters are not filled with miracles and grand gestures of faith. They are very normal events. He just starts showing up and letting things fall into place from there. Without that nudge, this ministry may have looked quite different.

This is one of the last times we hear about Mary in the Gospel according to St. John. The next time we see her is at the cross. It would have been really easy to wait and enjoy more time with her son. Faith tells her a different story. She gives him this nudge and then watches as faith takes flight. Jesus figures it out. He does not get it perfect. We hear some questionable moments throughout the Gospels. We also see that consistency is more important than perfection.

What are those things in your life that hold you back, keep you fearful of starting? What is the nudge that you need right now? Who do you know that may need such a nudge? I pray that we learn from the example of Mary and take the first step. Amen.