

Devotion, Week of January 26, 2025

Rev. Jeanne Simpson

This past Sunday we looked at the miracle of the water changed into wine at the wedding in Cana. This is Jesus' first miracle in the book of John. So I was curious about what the first miracles were in the other gospels. In Matthew, he begins by healing the sick throughout Galilee as he preaches in the synagogues there. In Mark and Luke he performs an exorcism in the synagogue in Capernaum, where he has been lodging with his disciples. Not only does John start with a wedding, but the next public ministry of Jesus is to go to Jerusalem during Passover and cleanse the temple of the money changers and sellers of sacrificial animals – an act that occurs after Palm Sunday in the other three gospels. In John, Jesus then speaks with Nicodemus about being born again, and the Samaritan woman at the well about living water, before we read of his healing someone.

These very different accounts show us how the authors emphasized different aspects of Jesus' ministry – the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke) emphasize many healings and exorcisms, but John emphasizes purifying Jewish practices, teaching, evangelism, and the welfare of the community. John's gospel is about the Word of God, and Jesus speaks often with strangers. As we think about Jesus' life, it is helpful to know that Jesus was primarily a preacher and teacher, not a miracle worker. He came to show us how to live, not to have people believe him because he did "magical" things like exorcisms. He was holy because of what he said and how he lived. As we get closer to Lent, we will look at texts that tell us his mission.

Yours in Christ,

Jeanne