

---

## *What Have I Got To Do With Thee?*

**A sermon by the Very Reverend Sam Candler  
Atlanta, Georgia  
The Second Sunday after the Epiphany**

**John 2:1-11  
Jesus at the wedding in Cana of Galilee**

*Woman, what concern is that to you and to me?*  
John 2:4

Jesus looked at his mother, his dear mother, the one who had birthed and nurtured him, the one who had raised him and cared for him.

They were at a wedding, a wedding party actually, and everyone was -supposedly- having a grand time. They, too, were having a grand time -- until the wine gave out. What happened? Did the host not plan correctly? We know what that's like. Did more people arrive than those who had actually formally answered the invitation? We know what that's like, too. Did people drink more wine than we had anticipated. I hope we do not know what that is like!

Who knows where the blame lay? Who knows what caused it? All we know is that the grand wedding party, in Cana of Galilee, gave out of wine. Jesus' mother approached Jesus with the news. Then, Jesus responded with some rather shocking words.

"Woman," he said, "of what concern is that to you and to me?"

We know what that attitude is like, too, don't we? In our various bible translations, the phrase is awkward, just as it is in the Greek; but what we have heard today is surely one of the more plausible translations. "Of what concern is that to you and to me?" It is a plausible translation, because we have said that so often in our own lives.

There are human beings dying of starvation in Africa? Of what concern is that to you and to me? Can we plausibly help them? There are people dying of AIDS there, too. How in the world could I help that?

There are people losing life and energy in our own country, people without jobs or income. Of what concern is that to you and to me? Aren't they to blame for not having planned ahead, for not anticipating, for not preparing?

Of what concern is that to you and to me? So what if someone around us is in need. I have other things to do. My time has not yet come.

Wait. Maybe Jesus did not say it exactly that way. There is another way that John 2.4 can be translated. In the classic King James Version of the Bible, Jesus' response is this: "Woman, what have I to do with thee?"

Unfortunately, this second translation sounds colder and more callous than the first.

Jesus turned to his mother and said, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" Another translation said, "What have you got to do with me?"

Imagine. But there is something convicting in both these translations. In fact, this second translation flows naturally from the first. Once we begin to say, "Of what concern is that to you and to me?" When there is sadness and need around us, when there is poverty and emptiness around us, and we say "What is that to you and to me?" -then there follows another attitude.

There is no longer division just between us and the world, but there is division between us period. So the translation becomes, "What have you got to do with me?" Once we begin to say, "Of what concern is that to us?" then the progression becomes, "What have you got to do with me?" "What have I got to do with thee?"

Yes, we know what this is like, too, don't we? What do we have in common with them? What do I have in common with you?

What does America have to do with Iraq? What has the western world to do with the developing world?

We've struggled in our own country's past, too, haven't we? On this weekend in which we honor Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., many re-visit that question: What do whites have to do with blacks? What do blacks have to do with whites?

What do we American citizens have to do with recent immigrants? What do we Georgians have to do with the folks downstream in Alabama and Florida? What do the residents of Atlanta have to do with other citizens of Georgia?

What does North Atlanta have to do with south Atlanta? What does midtown have to do with downtown? What does Buckhead have to do with midtown? What does outside 285 have to do with inside 285?

What does St. Philip's Cathedral have to do with Buckhead Village after midnight?

Once we start asking these questions, the progression does not stop. What do my children have to do with your children? What does my school have to do with your school?

Until, finally, the question becomes "What do I have to do with you?" "What do I have to do with my parents?" "What do I have to do with my wife?"

There are differences in this world, and they divide us. We choose, over and over again, to let them divide us.

What do I have to do with thee?

Jesus himself asked that question, not just to anyone, but to his own mother. What have you got to do with me? My time has not yet come.

But then, suddenly, the time did come. Mary's faith rose to the occasion. Mary, the mother of faith, hung in there with her son. Mary did not lose faith in the connection between her son and her. And Mary said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." No matter what he has just said, "Do whatever he tells you."

Then, suddenly, the time did come. What do I have to do with you? The answer is, "Everything."

For Jesus, the answer became, "Everything." I have everything to do with you.

Of course there are differences in the world, there are major differences in people around the world. People behave differently. People prepare for weddings and parties differently.

But consider this: Of all the differences in the world, no difference is as great as the difference between God and humanity.

Imagine, if you will, the incredible divide between divine and human. Yes, there are differences between East and West, between South and North. But what of this vast, qualitative difference between divine and human?

If anyone has the right to say, "What have you got to do with me?", God has that right. If anyone deserves to say, "What have I to do with thee?" it is this Jesus, divine and human, who shows up at a wedding party wanting to celebrate.

In Jesus, the differences meet. Jesus wants the wedding to be celebrated in the wildest and grandest way possible. What have I got to do with thee? Everything. What does the bride have to do with the groom? Everything. What does a son have to do with his mother? Everything. What does white have to do with black? Everything. What does divinity have to do with humanity? Everything.

Do whatever he tells you.

Take some water. It is fine, in and of itself, but it will become the wine of celebration and unity. It will be the sign that God has joined together what we thought were opposites, differences that caused us to be careless and callous.

There is no chasm greater than the one between divinity and humanity, between God and human. Our differences here on earth, no matter where on earth, are minor compared to that. Jesus closed that chasm at a wedding in Cana of Galilee. When the divine and the human meet, miracles occur. Jesus thus revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him.

Can we believe in him today? Can the divine and the human meet today? Can miracles occur? What have we got to do with them? What have I got to do with thee? Everything, in Jesus Christ our Lord.

AMEN.

The Very Reverend Samuel G. Candler  
Dean of the Cathedral of St. Philip