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## *Cana, King, and the Holy Voices of Change*

**A sermon by Canon Wallace Marsh**  
**Epiphany 2 – Year C**

When I was lay chaplain at Sewanee, I remember sitting in a small group with the Rev. Dr. Christopher Bryan, a distinguished author and professor of New Testament. Our group was gathered around a fireplace discussing today's gospel passage.

Dr. Bryan spoke up and said today's gospel is one of the most important and overlooked passages on the theology of the incarnation.

There we were in a room with a world-renowned New Testament professor making these extraordinary theological claims. We were on the edge of our seats! What was he going to say?

Dr. Bryan had the room's attention. He stroked his beard, closed his eyes, and in his very British accent said, "One of the things that makes the incarnation so real and so true is that even Jesus got annoyed with his mother."

Dr. Bryan was correct. To be fully human you have to have parents...and to be a really human you and your parents must have a major confrontation.

As I read today's gospel, there are social norms that seem to transcend culture and time.

Here is one for starters: Do any of you know a thirty-year-old man? If you do, would he be okay with the fact his mother made a major scene at a wedding reception he happened to be attending? Probably not!

Furthermore, no thirty-year-old man wants his mother publically volunteering his labor (or asking him to perform) without first asking permission.

Likewise, there is another social norm that likely transcends culture and time: No self-respecting mother wants their adult son to publically disrespect them at a large gathering of family and friends.

There is no response to Jesus' disrespectful comment because I am sure the look in Mary's eyes said all that needed to be said. Some of you have seen momma's glare and know exactly what I am talking about...

Welcome to the scene of today's gospel.

Now let me tell you what I think is going on here: I believe the intense exchange between mother and son is actually a conversation about the substance of the miracle itself, and that is change.

Let me say that again because it took a while to type: I believe the intense exchange between mother and son is actually a conversation about the substance of the miracle itself, and that is change.

Yes, this miracle is about changing water into wine...but this exchange between mother and son is a wonderful example of what it means to hear a voice that calls you to change.

Remember, this passage is situated in the middle of Epiphany, a season that began with wise men changing directions

because of stars and voices they heard in dreams.

Living a faithful life is about being open to holy voices that call you to change...

Notice, Jesus tells Mary—"My hour has not yet come." John's gospel is unique because Jesus is always in control of time. That is not the case in the other gospels. This is important because Mary, whom the Holy Spirit overshadowed, speaks the spirit of change into Jesus' life, at a moment where Jesus feels in control of time.

Jesus changes, because Jesus knows living a life of faith is about responding to voices that call us into new ways of being, voices that call us to change directions.

I have heard stories from people up here to people out there about how God has worked through the holy voices of family and friends to bring about change in your own life...another word for that is Epiphany!

So in this season of Epiphany, and on this holiday weekend, I am reminded about something that occurred 60 years ago on January 27. Yes, in just 10 days it will have been 60 years.

It was late in the evening on January 27, 1956. Martin Luther King's phone rang and when he answered it he heard the words "Leave Montgomery immediately if you have no wish to die."

With his wife and child asleep, King put on a pot of coffee and sat at his kitchen table. He described what happened next in his book, "Stride Toward Freedom."

*I was ready to give up. With my cup of coffee sitting untouched before me, I tried to think of a way to move out of the picture without appearing a coward.*

*In this state of exhaustion, when my courage had all but gone, I decided to take my problem to God. With my head in my hands, I bowed over the kitchen table and prayed aloud.*

*The words I spoke to God that midnight are still vivid in my memory. "I am here taking a stand for what I believe is right. But now I am afraid. The people are looking to me for leadership, and if I stand before them without strength and courage, they too will falter. I am at the end of my powers. I have nothing left. I've come to the point where I can't face it alone."*

*At that moment, I experienced the presence of the Divine as I had never experienced God before. It seemed as though I could hear the quiet assurance of an inner voice saying: "Stand up for justice, stand up for truth; and God will be at your side forever."*

*Almost at once my fears began to go. My uncertainty disappeared. I was ready to face anything."*

Whether it is an inner voice you hear in the midst of prayer (like MLK), or the nagging voice or your mother (like Jesus), or maybe it is that voice that comes to you in a dream (like the wise men), there are holy voices speaking in your life.

Holy voices calling us to change. Holy voices calling us to new ways of being. Holy voices calling us deeper into our relationship with God. These weeks of Epiphany are about hearing and responding to those holy voices!