

## **A Life Transformed** (John 2:1-11 )

Mitch was the executive manager of a popular radio station in New York City. As the middle ages of his life approached, he experienced what some call a midlife crisis. In an effort to deal with this time of doubt in his life, Mitch and his two best friends signed up for a week-long stay at a dude ranch in the desert southwest.

Now this particular dude ranch was a working ranch. Mitch and his buddies would be taking part in a real cattle drive. When the boys arrived at the ranch the first order of business was to get outfitted for the tough ride across the desert. True to his mid-life identity crisis, Mitch, it seems, couldn't find a cowboy hat that suited him. So he decided to forgo authenticity in favor of comfort and familiarity. Mitch stayed with his time-worn New York Mets baseball cap.

Before the cattle drive begins, the boys meet the trail boss, a crusty old cowboy named Curly. At first, Mitch and Curly don't hit it off. Curly takes his job seriously and sees Mitch and his buddies as city folk in need of baby sitting.

As the cattle drive unfolds, however, Mitch and Curly form a special bond as they learn from each other. Through a series of disasters on the trail, Mitch learns much about himself. With Curly's help, Mitch discovers "that one thing in life" that matters the most. Curly helps Mitch to see beyond his mid-life

crisis and get on with living life – realizing his full potential.

Toward the end of the drive, Curly dies sitting straight up in his saddle. Mitch and his buddies bury Curly out in the desert and hold a brief graveside service. They lay Curly to rest with his boots on – the way any real cowboy would want to be buried.

Realizing that his brief relationship with Curly has transformed his life, Mitch keeps Curly's weather-worn cowboy hat. As he rides away from the gravesite, Mitch replaces his baseball cap with Curly's cowboy hat. It's a transformative moment as Mitch also replaces Curly as the trail boss for the remainder of the cattle drive.

The changing of hats signals the transformation that Mitch has experienced. The baseball hat symbolized a naïve middle-aged man with unanswered questions about his purpose in life. The worn out cowboy hat symbolizes a transformed confident leader equipped to face the challenges of life, no matter how difficult life may become. Mitch trades his old identity for a new one. And in this transformative process he gains the meaning of life – his purpose in life – that one thing that matters most. Please pray with me.

Gracious and Transforming God  
open our hearts and minds to the  
scripture read and your word  
proclaimed. Make my words your  
words this morning. Help us to

make our lives available and open to you so that we may be transformed, shaped, molded, and changed into the committed disciples you intend for us to be. Through Christ Jesus we pray. Amen.

The gospel reading this morning is a familiar but sometimes confusing one. Jesus is attending a wedding in the village of Cana with his disciples. Mary, the mother of Jesus is also among the guests. When the supply of good wine begins to run out, Mary presses her son to do something about the problem. Jesus is reluctant to get involved. He questions his mother by saying, "Is that any of our business, Mother – yours or mine? This isn't my time." In the end, however, Jesus responds to his mother's concern and does something about this apparent breach of hospitality. He rescues the wedding host and turns nearly 180 gallons of water into fine wine.

The events that transpire at the Cana wedding are widely held to be the beginning of Jesus' "appointed" ministry on earth. The act of turning water into wine is the first miracle reported in the Gospel of John. The act is convincing and is also held to be a defining moment in the lives of the disciples – a transforming moment. They see the glory of Jesus and bear witness to his divinity in the miracle. From this point on the disciples are believers. The wedding at Cana is a watershed event in the ministry of Jesus Christ, as well as in the lives of the disciples. It can also be a watershed event in our lives here this morning.

Water is not the only thing that is transformed at the wedding. A *watershed* event as I have used the

term here is defined as an important turning point or transition leading to transformation. The wedding at Cana was very much a turning point or transition in Jesus' life and ministry. Jesus is transformed from the son of a carpenter into the Son of God. The wedding at Cana was also a turning point or transition in the lives of the disciples. They are transformed from fishermen and bean counters into evangelists – believers in The Way.

The story, however, is much more than a watershed event. The story is about our transformation, as well. It's about the role of the transformative process in the making of disciples.

Although the Christian Church will not begin to take shape until after the death and resurrection of the Christ, the wedding at Cana is also representative of the transformation of the Church. The wedding at Cana becomes the model for the marriage between Christ and his bride – his holy Church. It seals the covenant between God and the children of God, going back to the old covenant: I will be your God and you will be my people.

The wedding also established the covenant of marriage by God, who created us male and female for each other. With his presence and power Jesus graced the wedding at Cana of Galilee, and in his sacrificial love gave us the example for the love of husband and wife. Those joined in Christian marriage give themselves to one another in this holy covenant as husband and wife. It is the wedding at Cana then that transforms Jesus, the disciples, the early church, and all those who have been married in the church.

Transformation then is about change. Change comes about when we look deep within and learn more about

who we are. Change comes about when we discover for ourselves the potential God has in mind for us. Becoming a disciple requires transformation and implies change. Being transformed from who we are now into who God intends for us to be in the future is the core of discipleship. For most of us, these are two separate and distinct personas – who we were and who we have become.

In the movie *City Slickers*, Mitch learns much about himself in times of trial and begins to discover his real potential. Life on the trail requires that he be honest with himself and confront who he is, and then to become who he needs to be in order to survive. This is transforming. The man who finished that cattle drive is a different man than the one who started it – two separate and distinct persons.

As Jesus moved through his ministry he transformed and changed lives by teaching people who they are, giving them new stories, and a new way to tell their own stories. This is how Jesus is transforming and changing lives today – by teaching us who we are, giving us new stories, and helping us tell our own stories in new and different ways. These stories are the Gospel stories of the New Testament. These are our stories. Each of us has a part in the Gospel stories. Those stories claimed us before we knew them. They claimed us even before we knew they existed – like God's prevenient grace.

Some people wonder why I use so many movie references in my preaching. Well, while movies are mostly fictional formulations of Hollywood, they often reflect the truths of life – truths we might not otherwise discover in our own lives. While most people believe movies are fantasies that

encourage us to see life the way we would like it to be, the other side of that argument is that movies help us to see life the way it should be. Like the Psalms, movies help us to express our joy and frustration, our love and our hate, our thankfulness and our despair in ways that are safe.

The story of the wedding at Cana is about *learning* the full potential that God has in mind for us. The story of the wedding at Cana is about changing our lives to *achieve* that full potential in the world. And finally, the story of the wedding at Cana is about changing the world around us and helping others to *realize and achieve* the full potential that God has in mind for us all. The story of the wedding at Cana helps us to see our lives the way they should be – transformed by God's grace.

The story of the wedding at Cana calls us to be open to a life of change. It calls us to be always open to God's transforming presence in our lives. By following Jesus' action at the wedding, the story calls us to change our world and then to go out and help others change their world.

The story of the wedding at Cana is our call to learn of God's full potential for us in this life and to then allow God to transform us so that we might achieve that full potential. Like Mitch in the movie *City Slickers* we are all called to be used by God – to be transformed – changed into that special person God sees in each of us. We are called to live a life transformed.