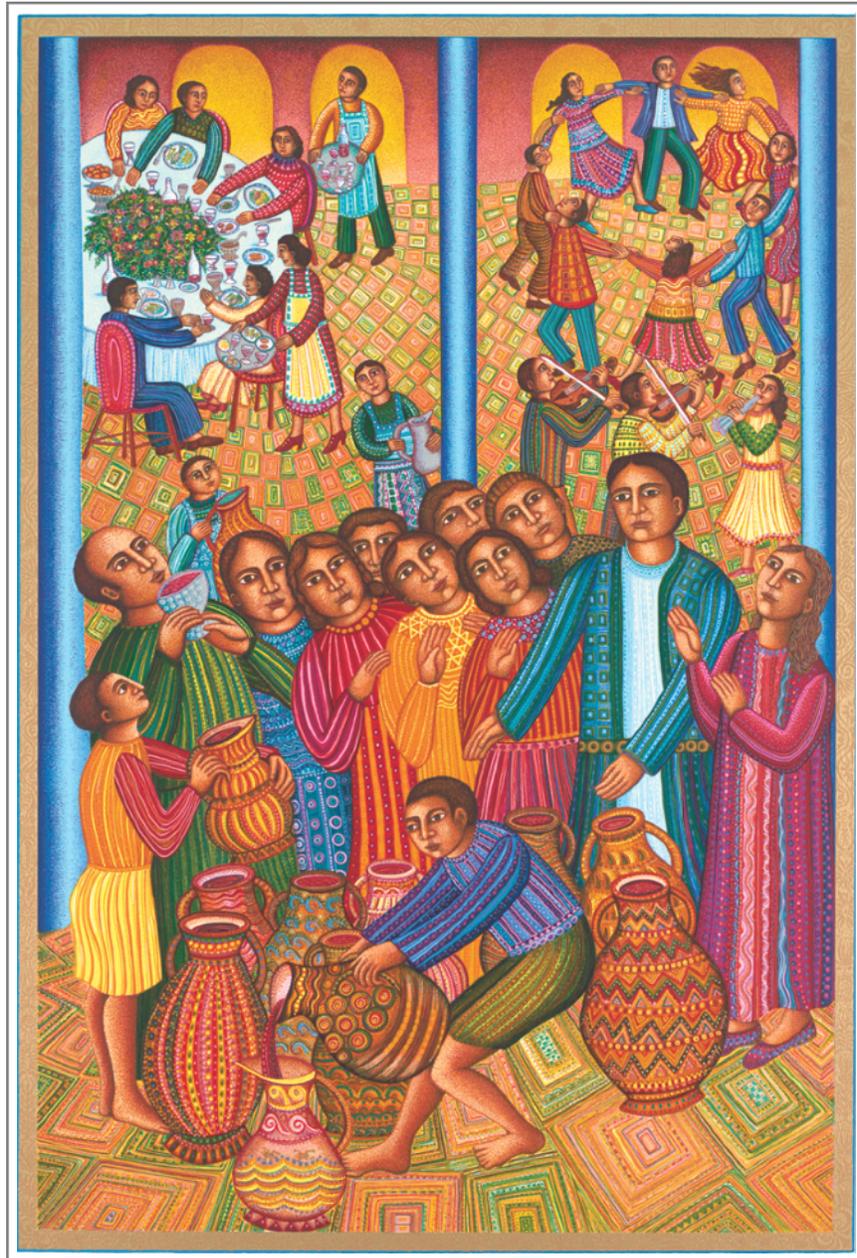


“Who Do You Invite?”

John 2:1-11

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Years ago, when Johnny Carson was the host of The Tonight Show he interviewed an 8 year-old boy. The young man was asked to appear because he had rescued two friends in a coalmine outside his hometown in West Virginia. As Johnny questioned the boy, it became apparent to him and the audience that the young man was a Christian. So, Johnny asked him if he attended Sunday school. When the boy said he did Johnny inquired, **"What are you learning in Sunday school?"** **"Last week,"** came his reply, **"our lesson was about when Jesus went to a wedding and turned water into wine."** The audience roared, but Johnny tried to keep a straight face. Then he said, **"And what did you learn from that story?"** The boy squirmed in his chair. It was apparent he hadn't thought about this. But then he lifted up his face and said, 😊 **"If you're going to have a wedding, make sure you invite Jesus!"** 😊 The little boy was on to something.¹

I HAD AN EPIPHANY this week! And I'm not just saying that because this is the second Sunday of Epiphany in the church calendar, no. I'm saying I had an Epiphany because only the Lord knows how many times I've studied and preached on Christ's first miracle at the Wedding in Cana, you can bet that over 2 decades it's been quite a few. I'm saying I had an epiphany because suddenly an essential nature of this miracle and in fact all miracles came to me. All of the sudden I had an intuitive grasp of this that made all the sense in the world; it was both simple and striking at the same time. So here it is, Invite Jesus. Told you that 8-year-old boy was onto something. Here's how I got there.

Patricia S. Laye tells a story of visiting a businessman's office, and while they talked, she noticed that he constantly twirled a small paperweight with a dime in it. Curious, she asked him about it. And he told her a story of a miracle.

He said that when he was in college he and his roommate were down to their last dime. They were the first two members of their families to ever attend college, and their parents were extremely proud of them. Each month their families sent them a small allowance to buy food. That month, however, their checks hadn't arrived. It was a Sunday, the 5th of the month, and between them they had ONE dime left.

They used the solitary dime to place a collect call to their home 500 miles away. Obviously, this was many years ago when you could make a call for a dime.... When his mother answered he could tell from her voice that something was wrong. She said that his father had been ill and out of work, so there was simply no way they could send any money that month. He asked his mother if his roommate's check was in the mail. She said that she had talked with his mother. They also couldn't raise the extra money that month either. They were sorry, but it looked like the two boys would have to come home. They had put off telling them, hoping for some solution. **"Were you disappointed?"** Patricia Laye asked.

"Devastated," the businessman said. They both were. They had one month remaining to finish the year, then they could work all summer to earn their expenses. He said his grades were excellent, so he had been



guaranteed a scholarship for the next term, all he had to do was finish the present term.

“What did you do?” Laye asked. This is when the miracle occurred. The businessman said that when he hung up the telephone, they heard a noise . . . and dimes started pouring out of the pay phone. It was crazy. They were laughing and holding out their hands to catch the money. Students walking down the hall thought they were out of their minds. They discussed taking the money and using it for their expenses. Nobody would know. But then they realized they couldn’t do that. It wouldn’t be honest.

He said they tried to return the money. He called the operator back and told her what had happened. She said that the money belonged to the telephone company, so to replace it in the machine. They did, over and over again, he said, but the machine wouldn’t accept the dimes.

He finally told the operator that the dimes kept falling back out. She said that she didn’t know what else to do, but she’d talk to her supervisor. When she returned, she said that the boys would have to keep the money, because the company wasn’t going to send a man all the way out to the school just to collect a few dollars.

The businessman looked over at Patricia Laye and chuckled, but there was emotion in his voice. He said they laughed all the way back to their dorm room. After counting the money, they had \$7.20. They decided to use the money to buy food from a nearby grocery store and to go job hunting after class.

Playing for groceries with only dimes created quite a stir and caught the managers attention. When they told the manager what had happened, he offered them both jobs. Their money bought enough supplies to last until their first paycheck, and their honest, humble nature got them a job, which resulted in finishing the semester and receiving their scholarship which enabled them to finish college the first in their families to do so. And they traced their accomplishment back to that miracle in a phone booth which they believed was an act of God.²

Do you see it? This miracle never would have happened if the two businessmen hadn’t invited Jesus into their lives. If you want things to go your way, if you want your most earnest prayers to be answered, if you want a miracle, it’s simple, really, **invite Jesus**. For you see when you **invite Jesus**, the right things, mostly small, sometimes big, start to happen. The inverse is equally as true. Don’t invite Jesus and one after another, mostly small, sometimes big, the wrong things start to happen.



🤔 It seems that NASA and the FAA (US Federal Aviation Administration) have a unique device for testing the strength of windshields on airplanes. The device is a gun that launches a lifeless fowl at a plane’s windshield at approximately the speed the plane flies.

The theory is that if the windshield doesn’t crack from the impact, it’ll survive a real collision with a bird during flight. It seems the British were very interested in this and wanted to test a windshield on a brand-new, high-speed locomotive they were developing.



They borrowed the chicken launcher, loaded the chicken, and fired. The ballistic chicken shattered the windshield, went through the engineer's chair, broke an instrument panel and 😊 embedded itself in the back wall of the engine cab (((cartoon 'twang' sound))).

The British were stunned and asked the NASA & FAA team to recheck the test to see if everything was done correctly. They reviewed the test thoroughly and had one recommendation: ***“Use a thawed chicken.”***

I don't think the British engineers were any less brilliant than engineers at NASA & the FAA. No, the difference was that the Chicken Launcher had become so much a part of the NASA and FAA engineers' lives that operating it became second nature.

Friends, all due respect, but don't be British, invite Jesus into your life so that following his ways becomes second nature and then watch as things start going your way, your most earnest prayers are answered and the opportunity for miracles abound.

Amen?!



¹ Collected Sermons by Brett Blair and Staff

² Jack Canfield, Mark Victor Hansen, Nancy Mitchell-Autio and Patty Aubery, *Chicken Soup for the Christian Family Soul: Stories to Open the Heart and Rekindle the Spirit* (HCI; Unabridged Version edition, 2000).

