

We thank you for the opportunity to gather today in congregation and worship you in song and in prayer and in your word and in fellowship and in laughter and all that we do, Lord. Thank you for the townspeople that came together to solve this problem this morning. Heavens knows I had no clue what to do. Thank God that you brought the folks and everything is okay right now. So we're praying today that you would lead us in all things because you are the pastor of this church. You're the leader of this church. You're the leader, the king, the head of the church universal, Lord, and all eyes are on you. In Jesus' mighty name, amen. First miracle that we're going to read about is a miracle that is commonly misunderstood in scripture. It is from John chapter 2 beginning with verse 1. The next day there was a wedding celebration in the village of Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there and Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the celebration. The wine supply ran out during the festivity so Jesus' mother told him, "They have no more wine." "Dear woman, that's not our problem," Jesus replied. "My time has not yet come." But his mother told the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." Standing nearby were six stone red water jars used for Jewish ceremonial washing. Each could hold 20 to 30 gallons. Jesus told the servants, "Fill the jars with water." When the jars had been filled, he said, "Now dip some out and take it to the master of ceremonies." So the servants followed his instructions. When the master of ceremonies tasted the water that was now wine, not knowing where it had come from, though of course the servants knew, he called the bridegroom over. "A host always serves the best wine first," he said. "Then, when everyone has had a lot to drink, he brings out the less expensive wine, but you have kept the best until now." This miraculous sign at Cana in Galilee was the first time Jesus revealed his glory and his disciples believed in him. After the wedding, he went to Capernaum for a few days with his mother, his brothers, and his disciples. I say that this is one of the more misunderstood passages of Scripture because if you understand the entirety of the Gospel according to John, there is a great sense of timing that follows through the Gospel of John. There is a great sense of, yes, Jesus knew who he was, but as he himself says, "My time has not yet come." Well, his mother seems to disagree with him, right? And we don't know, it just simply says his mother told him to go off and do what he tells you to do. So you can debate, as scholars do, as scholars often do, why his mother said that and why he listened to mother and why he just scuffed on saying, "My time has not yet come." Yet he goes and he performs what for him, you would think, is a simple miracle. He turns water into wine. But it is very significant because in the Gospel of John, it is the beginning of his formal ministry. And so you get this sense of timing. And you get that in other Gospels as well. They walked through the crowds when they came to get him because his time was not yet in all of those things. But in John, this is very significant. My time has not yet come. And then he immediately steps out and he performs this miracle over natural things. Water. He turns the molecular structure of water into the molecular structure of wine. And that is significant, of course, in and of itself. Again, I'm going to ask this question several times during our time in the Word together. Bring in another person who can do that simply by touching or speaking it into existence and I will resign because Jesus is not the only one worthy of worship. You can't. And so whether we're looking at a "simple miracle" water into wine or any of the other things that he does and a few of which we're going to examine today, the point is we take a lot of that for granted. We'll turn water into wine into a cliché or into a little saying, an idiom that we'll use. Right? We make lemonade out of lemons or water into wine, whatever the case may be. We take these things for granted not understanding that the same forces that created the universe, the same forces that we read about in Genesis and God spoke and it came into existence are at work here when he speaks or perhaps he thinks and the molecular structure of the water turns into the molecular structure of wine. It is transformed. It is recreated. There's a lot of metaphorical stuff in here. One of those things is water into wine, blind but now I see. Right? And that is the idea that saving the best wine for last, that this is unconventional, that Jesus is going to turn the kingdom of God upside down because the convention is you go to a wedding and everybody's sober and you bring out the good wine to show them how wealthy you are and then everybody gets a little lubed up and then you bring out the cheap wine because they don't care anymore. It's just the truth. Right?

That's what they did and people at parties will do that today. But Jesus turns everything upside down. It's another metaphorical aspect of this miracle. It is the fact that there is no second class with Jesus. There is no cheaper structure with Jesus. There is no cheaper creation with Jesus. It is the best. The best. Period. And you can go on to carry that metaphor to the earth, you can go on to carry that metaphor to the creation of human beings, you can go on to carry that metaphor that Jesus doesn't make anything to satisfy, bless you, the need to a want or what we think conventionally it should be. When he creates, he creates perfectly. He can't do otherwise. And so that little saying about, "Wow, normally they save the best wine in the beginning, you have the best wine in the end," is actually very significant when we come to the core of the miracle. So there are no simple miracles. There are no... I think it's just my voice. She was chill and then she came back. But there are no simple miracles. And that's what we're going to get at today. If you don't get the point, the theological point of holy, holy, holy, then we need to start another game. It repeats over and over again, holy, holy, holy, and then it gives lots and lots of reasons why God is holy. And when we talk about being holy, we talk about being completely other than anything else in the universe. Different, completely other. Yes, we are called to behave or act or live a holy life according to the word of God. But when we talk about a holy God, we're talking about purity. We're talking about complete otherness than any being that we may know or have heard of or have interacted with in all of our science, in all of our knowledge, in all of the things that we know about the earth and the universe completely other. And we sing of that majesty. We sing of his traits. We sing of all of the character traits and who he is that we are not. If you can take... Again, this is the theme for today. If you could take a human being on earth today and plug them into either one of those hymns and sing about them that way, I will resign because Jesus is not the only one. But you can. It's the great old hymns. They do that for you. They speak of who God is and/or they speak of the journey from unredeemed to redeemed. And then many will speak of what life is like afterwards. So when we're singing the hymns, remember that they're not just picked out randomly and you're singing these words and you should be hearing the things that we just talked about from John. No other person... And again, human words fail because we know that Jesus is God, fully human, fully divine, all of that. No other person is going to create wine from water. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty. He can. Period. And so all of it works together. And His majesty and His glory don't worship the king. Who are we worshiping? That's what we're talking about here in church. Let's go to Luke chapter 8. And we know, I didn't pick obscure miracles here to talk about, but you also know one of the ways that I approach scripture and teach it to you is to not take even the most spoken, the most taught scriptures and take them for granted. So let's read this one here. "One day Jesus said to His disciples, 'Let's cross to the other side of the lake.' So they got into a boat and started out. As they sailed across, Jesus settled down for a nap, but soon a fierce storm came down on the lake. The boat was filling with water and they were in real danger. The disciples went and woke Him up, shouting, 'Master, Master, we're going to drown!' When Jesus woke up, He rebuked the wind and the raging waves. Suddenly the storm stopped and all was calm. Then He asked them, 'Where is your faith?' The disciples were terrified and amazed. 'Who is this man?' they asked each other. When He gives a command, even the wind and waves obey Him." So there is something that we are probably as Christians very familiar with and there are so many preachable points in this story, in this parable. In what is happening here, Jesus being asleep at the time when all of the humans in the boat are absolutely losing their minds with fear. The idea that He was asleep in the boat, He wakes up and rebukes the storm and then asks them, 'Where is your faith?' Like, what is that all about? We can spend an entire sermon on that and it does speak to us. Were you supposed to have faith in Him while He's sleeping? And that's mostly the sermons that I hear. Like, although you can't hear God speaking to you, although you may feel He is asleep in the bow of the boat, He is not. Where is your faith in Him? If He's in that boat and He is asleep, if He wants that boat to go down, it will go down. If He wants that boat to make it through the storm, it will make it through the storm. Where is your faith? So there's your little mini-sermon of the day. But what we're focusing on is again the logos, the word. What does He do when He wakes up? He speaks. And we see this in Genesis, we see this when the word of God

becomes flesh, we know that His creative power is the Word. We refer to the Word of God as the living Word of God. He has given it through His prophets. He has given it, of course, through the final prophet, Jesus Christ. And He has given it to the apostles in the post-resurrection. And we have the Word of God. This is our creative force. If you would like to be saved, if you would like to be redeemed, if you know a soul today that is unsaved, unredeemed, ungenerated, it's not you that is going to be saved. That is going to do anything for them. Except bring the Word of God. There's your calling, there's your being of vessel, there's your being the hands and feet and eyes of the Lord. You can't say, "I am a Christian and I am in really good standing with God because of that, so because I like you, Mark, you will be saved." Doesn't work that way. But if I am working or caring about Mark, we're in conversation, whatever the case may be, we bring the Word of God, the regenerative power of the Word of God into Mark's mind, into his heart, the introduction of God's Holy Spirit. He begins thinking, he begins feeling, and our prayer, not that you're not, I'm just following the metaphor, the prayer is that he will turn and repent and lay his life down for Jesus. It's not you, it's him. So Jesus, of course, can do this directly. And so when we hear of miracles happening, miracles of healing, sometimes, but most often miracles over the laws of nature, like creation, he speaks and it happens. And this is what we should understand, like I said, from the very beginning of Scripture, all through the creative force, the regenerative force of God, the Logos, the Godhead Jesus, becoming flesh for the sake of his special creation, humans. So that's related. That is related to this rebuking of the wind and the waves. He created you. He can regenerate you physically by speaking. He can regenerate you spiritually. He can calm you, the storms, if you want to get metaphorical, the storms of your emotions, and you can praise God in that storm. Is that you? Probably not. If you left yourself to your own devices, you would probably be overwhelmed with grief, you would probably be overwhelmed with whatever the case may be, but when you turn it over to the regenerative power of God flowing through you, there is nothing more powerful than, as we say, praising God in the midst of a storm. Nothing more powerful. And you know when that is. We've all experienced that. Let's quickly read the next one. This is from the Gospel according to Mark, and I wanted to spread it around, so to speak, so we see these miracles throughout the Gospels. As Jesus came, or as evening came, Jesus said to his disciples, "Let's cross to the other side of the lake." So they took Jesus in their boat and started out leaving the crowds behind, although other roads followed. But soon a fierce storm came up, high waves were breaking into the boat, and it began to fill with water. Jesus was sleeping in the back of the boat with his head on a cushion. The disciples woke him up shouting, "Teacher, don't you care that we're going to drown?" That's the key element when we're talking about the spirituality of this story. "Don't you care if we're going to drown?" But what we're talking about here today is this. When Jesus woke up, he rebuked. Stop it! If you've rebuked your children, you know what a rebuke is. You don't just go, "Well, maybe if you've got that deadly mom lie, maybe that's good enough here." But usually it's a rebuke. Stop that. Don't do that. What you're doing is wrong, and you will stop it now. That sort of thing. He rebukes the wind and said to the waves, "Silence! Be still!" Suddenly the wind stopped and there was a great calm. Then he asked them, "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?" The disciples were absolutely terrified. "Who is this man?" they asked each other. Even the winds and the waves obey him. We see similarities and we see differences in the stories and they work together to provide the complete picture of what's going on here. There is human fear, human doubt, human terror, human weakness, because they can do nothing about what's happening to them. And really, who is in the back of that boat? Is he God, the Son of God? Is he a prophet? We've seen some things. Have we seen enough? Do we have faith in him? There's a lot going on here. And of course, for their sake, and then thousands of years later, for our sake, Jesus asks, "In the midst of this storm, when you think that I am asleep, you, and we do not see him, you do not see him, when you do not see him, why are you still afraid if you claim to be a follower of Jesus Christ?" And there's your "servant" out of that aspect of it, so to speak. Why are you afraid if you claim to be a follower of Jesus Christ? Do you have such little faith that you must be reinforced all the time on your little ego that Jesus loves you and cares about you and looking out for you all the time? Or can you trust what he says and the fact that

he is? Are you, like a little child, clinging to mom and dad, seeking constant reinforcement, needing to hear their voice, needing them to do something all the time to show you that they love you, to quell your insecurities? Or do you know they love you, and then when push comes to shove, they will always be there for you? That's the difference. Not to mention the fact that we have the miracle again, and that's the point of these two stories. He speaks and creation responds. So again, there's a lot there. We touched upon a few things. But what we're taking away is, again, let's go out in a boat, let's find a hurricane. You bring along a person who you think will stand up and speak and quell the hurricane, and if they do, I will resign. Because he is not worthy. You can't. That's the point of these stories. You can't. And again, the secondary aspect of what I want to teach is, don't take these for granted. Don't take Peter, don't take Jesus walking on water for granted. Don't just tell stories about water into wine or that old scripture or that story, yeah, I know that would really well do you. Do you realize what forces must be at work to alter the structure of creation? Just a word. We and all of our science have been trying to do that forever. We still do. We can't necessarily do it, so we try to create robots and artificial intelligence, because we can't do anything with ourselves or this earth. Jesus can. And, oh, by the way, he's never asleep. Deal with other stories, parables of miracles that Jesus performed that are rather common. You notice how it's an effect term, rather common in our reading of scripture. Some of our favorite parts, some of our favorite things to talk about, to read over. And they are loaded and packed, as I've demonstrated here today with very, very practical, preachable points. And of course, they're intended that way, as Jesus creates these for us that we can take away from it many, many, many different things. But here's from Matthew chapter 14, beginning with verse 22. "Immediately after this, Jesus insisted that the disciples get back into the boat, cross to the other side of the lake, while he sent the people home. After sending them home, he went up into the hills by himself to pray, while night fell while he was there alone. Meanwhile, the disciples were in trouble, far away from land, for a strong wind had risen and they were fighting heavy waves. About three o'clock in the morning, Jesus came toward them, walking on the water. When the disciples saw him walking on the water, they were terrified. In their fear, they cried out, 'It's a ghost!' But Jesus spoke to them at once, 'Don't be afraid,' he said, 'Take courage, I am here.' Then Peter called to him, 'Lord, if it's really you, tell me to come to you, walking on the water.' 'Yes, come,' Jesus said. So Peter went over the side of the boat and walked on the water toward Jesus, but when he saw the strong wind and the waves, he was terrified and began to say, 'Save me, Lord!' he shouted. Jesus immediately reached out and grabbed him, 'You have so little faith,' Jesus said, 'Why did you doubt me?' They climbed back into the boat, the wind stopped. Then the disciples worshipped him, 'You really are the Son of God,' they exclaimed. Well, we made a step forward in their belief, 'You really are the Son of God.' In the other stories that we read today, they were doubting or wondering who this man is that could do these things. And now they see what he has done here, and although they are sore afraid, although they are terrified at what they're seeing, and I love the language, I'm not afraid of the language that when they see the angel of the Lord, when they see Jesus walking on water, when they see Jesus resurrected, they are terrified because it's not normal, it's not natural, it's not as it should be. And there is definitely a real element here that we take for granted because we don't see him per se, but every story that we hear about him is preparing us for when we do see him again, and it's preparing the Church Universal, as we read the bridesmaids and the lamps just over the course of the past couple of weeks, and the Church Universal being prepared, how will she respond when Jesus returns and calls his church to meet him in the sky and return to the earth for final judgment? All of everything that we're reading, where we should not be feeling all of the good feels necessarily about Jesus and all the love and all the things, and he is power, he is creation, he is king, he is priest, he is judge, he is power, and when he comes again, it will not be in the form of a vulnerable baby, when he comes again, there will be no doubt that he has returned. And one way or the other, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess, "Jesus Christ is Lord." So we must understand that what we're reading now is in preparation, that we don't just read it and take the spiritual interpretation of it away, which is not to be lessened, the spiritual interpretation of having faith, the faith that can only be supplied by Jesus in Jesus and keeping

our eyes on Jesus is very valid. But we must understand the power of the forces at work here. He's walking on water. Again, the enemy takes that and turns it into some, "Well, you think you walk on water," some sort of glib phrase, "He's walking on water." He has taken what is natural and he has formed it or reformed it for his own purposes. I will say it again, let's go rent ourselves a charter fisher boat and get out there in the middle of a storm and bring along a person that can get out of that boat and walk on that water and I will resign. You can't, because he alone is worthy. Period. That's the point of these things. It's the point of miracles in general. Just like the point of prophecy, we see prophets of old and we see the fulfillment of that prophecy and we see the prophets of old are prophesying some good but an awful lot of bad. Repent! Your city is about to be dismantled brick by brick. And so they beat the prophet and they throw poop on the prophet and they stone the prophet and they ostracize the prophet and all of these different things. How many people of these schools of prophecy today are prophesying anything but horoscopes? How many people that claim to be prophets today are saying, "You should repent, for a disease will overcome you and you will breathe your last breath before the age of 30. Repent and turn to the Lord." Nope, I'm not saying that out there. That would be very unpopular. So when we talk about Jesus, we talk about him in all of these very glib terms, not understanding the very power that he wields in a single word, in a single thought, to come down off of that mountain from praying and walk on water, liquid to solid. And now he's going to take that very powerful event that demonstrates his glory, his holiness, his power, and he's going to demonstrate to the human race, "Have faith in me." He goes on and we know the rest of the story. And that's some good preaching there. One time I did, I don't know if you remember, I brought a ladder in and I set it up here in front of that and I stood up in front of it and it was basically, "Look at me and not him." You know, the wrong thing to do, right? "Keep your eyes on Jesus." I'm not real big on object lessons, basically because I think I fell off the ladder, so I don't do object lessons very often. But that's what we're talking about here. Do you see how we can take that and minimize it, when in actuality the demonstrations of his power are preparing us for his return? And the idea that, "Oh, and they saw Jesus and they were like, 'Oh wow, a cool dude with long hair and sandals who loves everyone. Yay! No! He is power. He is God. He is Yahweh. He is creation. He is creator, redeemer, sustainer. And as his special creation, you have the ability to be in relationship with him.'" And we just sort of glibly, "Okay. No, not just okay. Wow!" That's what it's about. You know? And I don't know if we read that properly. And I'm not putting that on you. I'm just, we collectively, as a church, as a Christian, I don't know if we read that properly. "Wow!" Instead of, "Oh, that's cool." Finish up here, "When Jesus saw they were ready to force him to be their king, he slipped away into the hills by himself." This is back in John. Remember the sense of timing that John has? Right? There's a sense of timing for every event that is in the life of Jesus. John brings it and it really brings forward. So his time is not yet here. He slipped away into the hills by himself. That's the same. "That evening Jesus' disciples went down the shore to wait for him, but his guard was still and Jesus still hadn't come back. They got into the boat and they began heading across the lake toward the turnip. Soon the gales swept down upon them and the sea grew very rough. They had rode three or four miles when suddenly they saw Jesus walking under water toward the boat. They were terrified." Why don't we read that for the way it is intended? Because you see people walking under water all the time. That's why. Because you're just conditioned to see them. No. So they were terrified. But he called out to them, "Don't be afraid. I am here." There's so much there. So much there in that simple interaction of his power creating liquid into solid. Because we know that he is human. He's not an apparition. He's not a ghost. He's not a spirit. He is human. That water became solid. And he's walking on that and they are terrified of this amazing demonstration of power over nature. And he comes back, now we're talking about the love of Jesus. "Don't be afraid. I'm here. This is who I am. I can do this. It's who I am. And I do not mean my miracles for harm. I mean them for good. I mean them for good for you now because you are going to pass through this storm. I mean them for good for the people of the Church Town Church of God in 2024 because they're going to read that. And they're going to know that he is all powerful. He is holy and he seeks good to carry you through your storm. To make you unafraid of his power. To make you

understand what it means to be redeemed by the very power that raised Christ from the dead. These are things as a Christian church, just like when we talk about the Lord's Supper and not taking it for granted. How about we pray our way through it? How about we fast for 12 hours before we partake of it? How about when we think of the washing of the saints feet? That we think of the incarnation of the Christ. And we don't take it for granted as just an ordinance to be performed. How about every Sunday when we pray the Lord's Prayer and I say, "Please, if you're just going to recite this, don't bother. If you're going to pray it, let's pray together." Then let's read the word for what it is. Jesus is power and that power is in you. What are you doing with it? I love that. Don't be afraid. I'm here. They were eager to let him in the boat. I bet they were. They were eager to let him in the boat then and immediately they arrived at their destination. Folks, the miracles, of course they speak for themselves and you have read them many times. But I hope today that you've seen some sort, seen them in a light that makes you go, "Oh wow." I never just stopped for 10 minutes and thought about the creative force of God changing the walls of nature. To serve himself then for his purposes, to serve the immediate circumstance, and to be written down for posterity to serve you today. I hope that there is an awe and a reverence and a fear of the Lord that is spoken of in Scripture that you carry in your heart because he is holy. He is creator. But I also hope you hear the words, "Don't be afraid though. I am here." I hope you hear all of that wrapped up in what he did and what he does every single day of your life. Amen.