

Didn't Do It By Himself

Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable to you O God, my rock and my redeemer.

The sports fans among us may be able to identify the image



on the screen. It is the Heisman Trophy given each year to a college football player whose “outstanding performance best exhibits the pursuit of excellence with integrity. Winners epitomize great ability combined with diligence, perseverance, and hard work. (Wikipedia)



So what about this one, who knows what this is? This is the Trophy presented each year to the Most Valuable Player of the Super Bowl. Anyone know the name of this trophy? It is the Pete Rozelle Trophy.

The other day I did some research on these two awards. I looked back over the last 40 years for both the Heisman Trophy and the Super Bowl MVP. My research confirmed what I thought, and it something that is one of my pet peeves.

Among the last 40 recipients of the Heisman Trophy were 23 quarterbacks, and 14 running backs. So that is 37, that leaves 3. One of those three was a wide receiver, Tim Brown from Notre Dame. The others were both from the University of Michigan, Charles Woodson was a defensive back and Desmond Howard a wide receiver. But their position play wasn't necessarily what won them the award, it was their play as kick returners.

What about the Super Bowl MVP? Are things any different, well yes and no. In the last 40 Super Bowls the MVP has been 24 quarterbacks, but only 5 running backs. The other 11 recipients were 10 position players and one kick returner, the same Desmond Howard in 1997 playing for the Green Bay Packers. For you trivia buffs, Desmond Howard is one of only four players to win the Heisman Trophy and be Super Bowl MVP. The others

were Roger Staubach, Jim Plunkett, and Marcus Allen; two quarterbacks and a running back.

So we recognize these quarterbacks for the passes they complete and the running backs for the yards they gain and the kick returners for their return yardage. But how many passes does the quarterback complete, how many yards does the running back gain or the kick returner return if not for the other 10 players on the field.

A quarterback needs the behemoth linemen blocking for him and he needs sure handed receivers to get open and catch those passes. Running backs need the linemen to create holes and kick returners need the other ten players to provide running space. For the Super Bowl there is something else they need also, defenses to keep the other team from scoring so their team can win.

Because only once, and you have to go all the way back to Super Bowl V, when the MVP was Chuck Howley, a linebacker for the Cowboys, has a player from a losing team won the award.

The reality is that no matter how good the Heisman Trophy winner is or how good the Super Bowl MVP is, football is a team game and the award winner did not do it by himself.



Two weeks ago we heard Matthew's account of the Magi following the star and finding Jesus. They were astrologers and the star pointed them to the location of the messiah. Last week we heard Luke's account of Jesus' inauguration into his ministry with the voice from heaven declaring him God's son and the dove descending upon him. This morning we move to John's gospel and John's account of Jesus' first public act of ministry.

The text opens "on the third day." I love openings like that, for someone like me it begs the question, "third day of what"? So we go back to Chapter 1. John the Baptist is chatting with two of

his disciples and Jesus walks by. John says, "Look there is the Lamb of God and the two disciples start following Jesus. One of those followers is Andrew, who introduced Jesus to his brother Simon, and Jesus changed his name to Peter.

Day two Jesus heads to Galilee, finds Philip and says "Follow me." Philip finds Nathanael and says we found the guy the prophets wrote about Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth." Nathanael proves Jesus has been living in the margins when he asks "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Jesus has a conversation with Nathanael and Nathanael becomes a follower.

Now we hit day three, and there is a wedding in Cana. According to some scholars Cana was roughly 4 miles north of Nazareth and is Nathanael's hometown. The text tells us that the mother of Jesus is there. This is one of two mentions Mary has in this gospel, the other being at the crucifixion, and in neither case is her name given.

Jesus and the disciples are also invited to the wedding. John doesn't bother to tell us who is getting married, or if they were

somehow related to Mary and Jesus and how they possibly could be connected to the disciples who Jesus had just called, all John tells us is that they are invited to the wedding.

Then the wine gives out. Remember, in Jesus' time weddings were a week-long event. This is not the three or four hour receptions that we may experience. It is also a sign of very poor hospitality and a considerable embarrassment to the hosts and the couple to run out of wine.

Mary looks at Jesus and says, "Hey Jesus they are out of wine." Now friends did you hear a request in there? Did you hear Mary explicitly ask Jesus to do something? Jesus replies "That's not our concern, and besides, it is not my time yet!" Now I don't know about any of you, but if I had answered my mother that way...

Mary doesn't argue with him, she looks at the servants and says "do whatever he tells you to do." Jesus is somewhere around 30 years old, scholars suspect Joseph has been dead for many years and it is just Mary and Jesus. I wonder what Jesus

has shown Mary during those years that would give her the confidence to know Jesus could handle the situation.

So now Jesus is on the spot. The servants are waiting for instructions and the five or six disciples who think he is the Son of God are watching to see what happens. “Fill the jars with water” he says to the servants.

Let’s make sure we understand what Jesus just said. This is Cana in ancient Galilee, not the banquet hall at the fancy hotel. There is not a kitchen with running water in the back they could take the jars and fill them. There is a well somewhere in the town. And the jars were made of stone, and each jar held somewhere around 20 gallons of water. If you visit the Wedding Church at Cana in Northern Israel like this person did you can see one of

the jars on display.



20 gallons of

water weighs roughly 166 pounds, google wasn't helpful in coming up with a weight for the jar.

When the servants filled them to the brim. So how long do you think it took for them to lug the six jars to the well, fill them to the brim and then bring them back to the wedding? Most likely longer than the one sentence in the text would lead us to believe.

The servants come back Jesus instructs them to draw some and take it to the chief steward. There was no public display by Jesus of any kind. Only Jesus, the servants and the disciples know what is in the jars. After tasting what was brought to him the chief steward compliments the groom, "by this time everyone else would have brought out the Boone's Farm, but you are serving the best. Wouldn't you like to know what the groom thought?"

So for almost two thousand years people have been telling the story about the day Jesus turned the water into wine. For the disciples, the servants and I suspect eventually many other people when they realize what had taken place, this wasn't a story about Jesus, it was an experience of Jesus.

But Jesus did not do it by himself. If not for the servants taking the stone jars to the wells, filling them to the brim and bringing them back to the wedding there would have been no water to change to wine.

A little boy had to bring his lunch with him when he went to hear Jesus speak so Jesus could feed the 5,000 men plus the women and children and those people could have an experience of Jesus. The disciples became servers and clean up personnel so the people could have an experience of Jesus.

Tomorrow we remember Martin Luther King, Jr.



an American Baptist minister and activist who became the most visible spokesperson and leader in the civil rights movement. King is best known for advancing civil rights through nonviolence and civil disobedience. It was work that earned him the Nobel Peace Prize. (Wikipedia) It is certainly

appropriate for us to reflect on Dr. King's legacy as we consider the work that is still unfinished.

But Martin Luther King did not do it by himself. To achieve his goals, he needed the support of thousands of people who boycotted busses and sat at lunch counters and walked across the Pettis bridge knowing that Bull Connor and company were on the other side waiting to beat them, and then were willing to cross that same bridge two more times before completing the march to Montgomery. For many an event that was an experience of Jesus.

Just like Jesus didn't do it by himself at the wedding feast at Cana, Jesus doesn't do it by himself today. Teresa of Avila said "Christ has no body now, but yours. No hands, no feet on earth, but yours. Yours are the eyes through which Christ looks compassion into the world. Yours are the feet with which Christ walks to do good. Yours are the hands with which Christ blesses the world."

It is up to each of us to do our part so others have an experience of Jesus. It doesn't necessarily require a theological education. It may mean driving a car, making a sandwich or 700, sewing a patch on a garment, or hammering nails.

One of the memories of Gulfport that will stay with me forever is Hubert Simmons. There were about 10 of us working on



Hubert's sister's house one day when

Hubert stopped to say hello and thank us for being there. He



came back on Friday, our last day there,

got out of his car, walked up to us and said, "I didn't believe in

miracles until you people came along."

Friends that is an experience of Jesus, and Jesus didn't do it
by himself.