

## IS VODKA ALLOWED?

John 2:1-11

There is a legend which states that in the late middle ages, the Russian Czar had come to the conclusion that in order to unite his country, there would have to be one state religion to which everyone should belong. He carefully considered all of his options. Finally, he settled on a concise list of three, Islam, Buddhism or Christianity. He called representatives from each of the three religions to his court in Russia and asked them each to state the case for their religion before himself and his advisors.

The Muslim representative spoke first. He spoke of the humaneness of Islam, of its tolerance for others, its respect for science and culture, and how it came with a complete legal system that had been refined and perfected through the centuries. When he had finished his pitch, he asked the Czar if there were anything else he would like to know. "One thing," the Czar told him, "Does Allah look favorably upon Vodka?"

The Muslim emissary shook his head and told him no, that alcohol was an abomination to Allah, and was not permitted.

"Next!" cried the Czar, and the Buddhist missionary was ushered in. The Buddhist monk explained the basic teachings of the Buddha, how all of life was suffering and how the Buddha showed the way to end suffering. Finally the King was getting bored and said, "I'll tell you how I stop suffering. Vodka! What does your Buddha have to say about that?"

The Buddhist monk told him that intoxicants were a hindrance to enlightenment and were not permitted in Buddhism.

"Next!" cried the Czar, and a Christian Orthodox monk was ushered in. But before he could even begin teaching his elementary catechism, the Czar stopped him short. "Just tell me one thing, does your Jesus allow vodka?"

"Are you kidding?" the monk said, "We will give you wine and bread at every service of worship."

"Now I know what I am!" proclaimed the Czar, "I am a Christian! Baptize me, and all of my people." We can imagine that he also ordered them to break out the vodka in celebration.

Now, many people use this story of Jesus turning the water into wine as a way of showing that Jesus didn't have anything against alcohol. While this is true it's the wrong emphases to place on the story. Look at verse eleven. The miracle was a sign to reveal Christ's glory. It was a way to help his disciples understand who he was that they might put their faith in him.

Christ wants us to understand who he is so that we might follow him and know of God's mercy and grace. God meets us where we are so that we might come to know Jesus and start a personal relationship with him.

What has Jesus done to get your attention? May we be opened to seeing God's hand in our lives and be transformed into who God created us to be.

God bless,  
Pastor Barbara