



John 2:1-11  
So That You May Believe: John  
“Water To Wine”

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March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2022

This morning we continue our journey through the gospel according to John. John’s reason for writing (as he himself says) is so that we would believe. That’s his purpose. And today we get the first of many miracles that Jesus performs, which were all for the sake of people believing. They’re not just for show, or just for the person who benefits from them, but for others as well. And that includes us today. In fact, I would suggest to you that the miracle we look at today is especially for people who were not there to witness this miracle, because in a certain sense: no one actually witnessed this miracle. It’s subtle; it’s behind the scenes...and only a handful of people really even know that Jesus did anything. So, let’s turn to **John 2:1-11** as we read God’s word to you and me today.

So, the problem here is fairly straight-forward: **They’ve run out of wine at a wedding reception.** Let’s put this in perspective. For them, this is worse than the Seahawks trading Russell Wilson and cutting Bobby Wagner in the span of 24 hours. By the way: the Seahawks did the right business move, even though it stinks to see two great players move on from the team. Emotionally the moves stink; intellectually, both moves were almost certainly the right thing to do. But running out of wine at a wedding reception is both emotionally and intellectually depraved, and would be highly embarrassing.

Now, Weddings in Jesus’ day were a big deal. That’s not to say that they aren’t today. But there is clearly less value put on marriage today. It has become more of an “option” for a man and a woman who are committed to each other and want to spend their lives together. Marriage is not esteemed the way it once was, and particularly for them.

And in regards to the wedding event itself, there are a few differences from today. **The most significant difference was the focus on the wedding as a spiritual event, and the marriage as a union designed to bring glory to God over the course of the marriage.** Their weddings were infused with their religious faith and customs in ways that don’t always happen today. Weddings, and the marriage relationship after the wedding event, were an

outgrowth of their faith. For instance, marriage is used as a metaphor throughout Scripture to describe the relationship between God and His people: Hosea 2:7, Isaiah 62:5; Jesus tells parables using marriage or weddings as the metaphor; Revelation 19:7 (written after today's events, of course, but still rooted in this same cultural understanding of marriage). So, this is a familiar metaphor for them, and a part of who they are, and they took it seriously. Marriage was not casually entered into or defined however they wanted to because it was deeply spiritual. Today, the idea that a wedding and a marriage is something holy and God-honoring and a metaphor for our relationship with Him, is completely lost outside of the church, and even inside it some.

And as this particular wedding celebration was cruising along, they ran into a big problem: they ran out of wine. The lack of wine at a joyous occasion such as this would mar the event; it would be forever tainted...known as "the wedding that ran out of wine." And it would be a very embarrassing thing to have happen to the groom and his family, since that was the gift, or a part of it, that they were giving.

**In fact, it was such a big deal, that legal recourse could have been taken against the groom and his family.** So, this is the problem that Jesus' mother – Mary – brings to him, telling a couple of servants there to do whatever he asks. Probably the groom is a close friend or even extended family, which is why she's particularly concerned and takes it upon herself to try and solve the problem. But, in speaking to Jesus, the pressure is now on him at least a little bit as these guys are standing there waiting to do whatever he tells them. Now, to be sure, Jesus is free at this point to do what he wants, and when he wants to. We parents often want to control our kids – even when they're adults as Jesus is here. But she doesn't cross that line. She doesn't actually tell him what to do or when to do it. Jesus could have handed the guys the Jewish equivalent of a couple hundred dollars, or found someone who had that kind of cash on them, asked if it could be borrowed for/given to this cause, and he could have told them to go buy some more wine at the local QFC. Jesus could have solved the problem like that.

Instead: **He tells them to fill the jars with water, draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet (John 2:7-8).** This would have been a person, a guest at the wedding, who had been asked by the bride and groom, or their parents, to watch over the festivities. It was a position of honor, but also great responsibility. Surely, he was well aware that the wine had run out, and I imagine he was more than a little concerned about what to do.

And along come these servants handing him a cup to drink from. He's astonished by what he tastes: wine! And it was of such good quality that he was compelled to say something to the groom about saving the good wine for the last part of the celebration, which is contrary to how things normally operate.

There are a few things we can learn from this miracle. **First, we see here that Jesus desires to be invited into the personal and intimate spaces of our lives.** Jesus' very presence at the wedding tells us this. He doesn't want to just be invited to the superficial, surface aspects of life. He loves being involved in the deepest places of our lives: our marriages, our parenting, our finances...he longs to be a part of those things that are not "out there" for the world to see, but are behind the scenes, underneath the surface...the deeper, intimate aspects of our lives.

**Second, and closely related, we see that Jesus works in our lives in the inner, private, hidden parts of our lives.** So, he likes to be involved in these spaces (point 1) and he goes to work in those spaces as well. Compare this, for example to John 2:12-25, the section that comes next and we'll look at next week, where Jesus is at the largest public festival in Israel, and overturns a bunch of tables in front of everyone. It was a very public thing that he did there. So, Jesus operates in both areas of life, and his realm of impact is in both. His disciples – you and I – are called to be his disciples in both spaces – the public and the private; the open and the intimate.

And here, in today's passage, it's in the intimate space that he operates. We see this in the miracle itself. **The changing of the water to wine isn't a public "show." It just happens, in secret.** No one sees it. It's quiet, it's behind the scenes, it's private...we might say that it's hidden. No one

announced what Jesus had done. In fact, Jesus himself doesn't really do anything. He didn't ask everyone to take a seat and listen while he did this, or lift up hands in prayer while he worked the miracle. No calling out in a loud voice or anything like that. This was a quiet miracle.

In fact, it's so quiet, we don't even know exactly when the transformation happened. He told the guys to take these jars, fill them with water, pour some into a cup, and take to the master of ceremonies. When did the water become wine? The moment Jesus spoke? As they filled the jars? As the servants filled the cup? In the cup as they carried it to the Master of Ceremonies? As he drinks it? We don't know. **All we know is that the change happened.**

Last night our family had homemade apple pie with ice cream for dessert. Elliott, our youngest, has never liked apple pie. Well, last night he decided he'd try it, one more time. And wouldn't you know it, he liked it! We don't know what changed or when the change happened. The last time he tried it was around Christmas or maybe Thanksgiving. He didn't like it then. Something changed inside of him somewhere along the way. I'm happy for him...though it stinks for for the rest of us because it means less apple pie to go around. 😊 My family is praying that something happens with me in regards to onions. 😊

But it's similar to what happens here in this passage. This miracle is something that Jesus did in his own way, in his own time, out of view from the world. And that's how Jesus often works in our lives. It's an inside job. It's in the heart, it's in our soul, it's in our personal relationships and the intimate spaces of our lives. That's where Jesus often operates.

**So: Are we inviting him into those personal places, so he can work on us there?** For instance, is Jesus invited into our marriages? Are we intentionally seeking to honor God in that relationship? Are we seeking to experience God's holiness, his purity, his joy, his forgiveness and reconciliation in our marriages or our other close relationships? As I mentioned earlier: Biblically, there is a connection between marriage and our relationship with God. Marriage is a kind of expression of the holiness of God and the holiness we're called to in our walk with him, and he works in those spaces in our

lives. Or what about our inner selves: Are we inviting him into our thoughts, our desires, our wants, and the choices we're making...and what's the transformative work he's doing there?

**We also see in this passage that we can turn to Jesus in the midst of crises.** I know running out of wine at a party – even a wedding reception – doesn't sound like a “crisis.” Maybe that feels like too strong of a word. But the fact is, it really would have been a major blemish on this wedding and on the families – particularly of the groom. And Jesus is not afraid to step into that space and help bring about a solution – we just have to bring the issue to him. He welcomes that dialog. What kind of crisis are you facing that needs to be brought to Jesus? There are crises of global proportions such as the war between Russia and the Ukraine, and we pray it doesn't escalate. We certainly can bring those things to him. But maybe you have a crisis in your marriage, or in your parenting, or your finances, or your health. You know what's causing you stress and sleepless nights. He welcomes us to bring those things to him.

**Lastly, we see that his transformative work is a gift of grace.** No one did anything to make this happen. No one earned it. No one paid him. His mom brought it to his attention and he asks the servants to do a couple things...but he takes care of the miracle on his own. It's all grace. This is what Jesus offers to us: grace. We may not live up to the standards of society or the expectations of others around us...the wine may run out...but Jesus takes care of us, and it's his gift of grace.

To further highlight this we see that the water jars that he had the servants fill were for ritual cleansing. Probably many of us are aware of the necessity of being cleansed in the Jewish faith before one can participate in religious ceremonies. Some of the religious leaders of the day – the Pharisees in particular – were especially legalistic about this. And yet it is the water that comes out of those very ritual cleansing jars that becomes the new wine that Jesus offers by his grace.

**There's a certain degree of irony (and likely not accidental) in these symbols of “religious law” being used as a vehicle of Jesus' free gift of**

**grace.** His grace changed the water to wine, and his grace changes us. It's not something we do. Maybe right now we'd almost prefer that Jesus not change us but change water to gasoline for our cars...that's the miracle many people would like to see happen...but if we're honest we'll realize that this is short-sighted and worldly. Jesus' grace takes us from one trajectory in life and eternity, and puts us on a whole new course in this life and the life to come. What's a few more dollars spent on gasoline in light of that? When we've truly encountered Jesus and he's entered into the intimate spaces of our lives – the core of who we are, our thought life, our closest relationships, our values, our beliefs – when Jesus is invited into our lives at that level, he brings grace and he transforms us.

When I think of this, and especially as I think of the master of ceremonies tasting the wine and discovering that it's better than what was served earlier, I'm reminded of Psalm 34:8, **“Taste and see that the Lord is good” (Psalm 34:8)**. That is Jesus' invitation, and this miracle reminds us of it. His grace is good. He is good. He comes into our lives and oftentimes works in unseen ways, behind the scenes, but there's a transformation that takes place. It's all grace. And it is very good.

**What facet of your life could use some transforming; could use a measure of Jesus' grace?** And particularly, what's an inside, behind the scenes, hidden part of your life that needs Jesus' transformation? Maybe it's your thoughts; or it's things that are influencing you in the wrong direction such as the books you read, or the websites you go to, or other people in face-to-face ways, or your desires or your fantasies, or some other facet of your life that not many people know about because it's behind closed doors, hidden from public view. Whatever it is, whether it's at the level of a crisis or it's nowhere near that, give it over to Jesus and let him go to work in your life. Invite him in to that space. You may not see the work he does at first. It may be hidden in some way. But eventually, in his timing, you'll get to taste the fruit of what it is he's doing; you'll get to taste and see his grace for yourself, and believe like the disciples in his day did: that the Lord is indeed good. Let's pray...Amen.