



On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine."

"Woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My hour has not yet come."

His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.

Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim.

Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet."

They did so, and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside and said, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now."

What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

After this he went down to Capernaum with his mother and brothers and his disciples. There they stayed for a few days (John 2:1–12).

I want you to imagine for a moment five men walking on a narrow and dusty road with their new leader. These men have left their livelihoods to follow this man they call Rabbi. This Rabbi looks more like a carpenter than a teacher of the Law. But this week, things are changing and the teaching has begun.

The men begin to wonder where they are going. Maybe to the temple to worship? Possibly to the synagogue to teach? Will they slip away to the countryside to pray? They haven't been told but they each have their own idea.

I wonder if it was Andrew who finally asked, "So Rabbi, where are you taking us? To the desert to pray?"

"No" says one of the disciples, "He's taking us to the temple for worship."

As the men began to argue amongst themselves, Jesus lifts his hand and softly replies, "We're on our way to a wedding."

"Why in the world would we go to a wedding?" the men must have thought. That's a good question. Think about it. Why would Jesus, on his first journey, take his followers to a party? Didn't they have work to do? People to heal? Messages to be taught? Pharisees to rebuke? Jesus didn't have a whole lot of time so how could a wedding fit into his purpose on earth?

In the second verse of John 2 we get our answer, "*Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding.*" Does it seem unusual to you that Jesus would attend a wedding? We all have different misconceptions of who Jesus was and what he came to do. Would the Son of God really party for a week with common village folks at an insignificant wedding? It seems odd that John would tell us about this wedding.

Max Lucado writes, "Big deal? I think so. I think it is significant that common folk in a little town enjoyed being with Jesus. I think it is noteworthy that the Almighty didn't act high and mighty. The Holy One wasn't holier-than-thou. The One who knew it all wasn't a know-it-all. The One who made the stars didn't keep his head in them.

"Jesus was a likable fellow. And his disciples should be the same. I'm not talking debauchery, drunkenness, and adultery. I'm not endorsing compromise, coarseness, or obscenity. I am simply crusading for the freedom to enjoy a good joke, enliven a dull party, and appreciate a fun evening.

"We used to be good at it. What happened to us? What happened to clean joy and loud laughter? Is it our neckties that choke us? Is it our diplomas that dignify us? Is it the pew that stiffens us? I must confess; it's been awhile since I've been accused of having too much fun. How about you?" (*When God Whispers Your Name*, Max Lucado)

Jesus was a man who loved to have fun. He enjoyed people and celebration. If you're surprised by this, I have some good news for you today. In this story, John shows us not only that Jesus attended a wedding, but that he kept the wedding feast from being a dismal failure. To appreciate what happened, we need to know a little more about Jewish weddings in the First Century.

### **The Problem: Wine Has Run Out at a Wedding**

In the villages of Palestine, weddings were really important events. Usually, the entire town was invited and the events took

place over about a week. Most weddings I go to last about four hours and my wife and I try to slip out after the cake is cut! Can you imagine spending an entire week celebrating with your friends and family? I could get used to that! Jewish weddings during Jesus' day were community-wide events and hospitality was very important. Families were under a considerable amount of pressure to provide lavishly for their guests the entire week. Food, drink, and celebration was top of the menu. In that culture you didn't give a gift to the couple from their registry, like a waffle maker or iron. Gift-giving was a special way to give honor to the couple and their families. The same was true for the host family. If the appropriate customs were not followed, not only would they be open to public shame but also to legal action. If the host family did not provide enough food and drink for the festivities, they could be sued for a breach of hospitality. When the wine runs out, the host will be embarrassed and dishonored. This was a crisis.

Mary, the mother of Jesus, brings this crisis to the attention of Jesus. Since Cana is only a few miles from Nazareth, Mary might have been part of the planning for the wedding. The families were probably good friends. Knowing Jesus could do something, she brings the problem to him.

### **The Miracle: Jesus Turns Water into Wine**

Jesus' response seemed rude and confusing, "*Woman, why do you involve me*" (v. 4)? In English the tone of Jesus seems harsh, but it wasn't meant to be. Jesus uses a formal term to address his mother. He did the same to the "woman" from Samaria (4:21), the "woman" caught in adultery (8:10) and again to his mother at the cross (19:26). It's like the term "ma'm" in the South. It is unusual to talk to your mother this way but it points to a significant change in the mission and ministry of Jesus. He is no longer under the watchful eye of his mother nor can she bend his ear about things that can distract Jesus from his purpose on earth. I don't think Mary had any idea what Jesus would do. She wants help for a very serious problem so she brings it to the attention of her firstborn son.

Mary was focused on the immediate problem, but Jesus was focused on the cross. He replies, "*My hour has not yet come*" (v. 4). The word "hour" is used in the Gospel of John to refer to Jesus' work on the cross—his death and crucifixion. In other words, Jesus will provide wine for the party, but more importantly, his death on the cross will give salvation to all who come to him and respond in faith. His blood will be poured out as new wine for the forgiveness of sins.

When Jesus, the Son of God, is your boy, like Mary, you better tell the servants, "*Do whatever he tells you*" (v. 5)! "I don't know what we are going to do here, but I know someone who can do something about it," says Mary. That should really encourage

you this morning. You may not know what to do but you know someone who does! We all will come across a problem or a crisis that leaves us anxious, indecisive and fearful. That's just life. We can choose to worry about it, try to fix it ourselves or do nothing and hope it goes away. But, there is another option. We can bring it to Jesus in prayer and say, "Help me, I don't know what to do." Jesus cares about every little thing that is going on in your life.

The story takes a turn and we begin to understand the meaning and significance of what's going on when Jesus tells the servants to fill six stone jars with water. These were not just any water jars. These stone jars were used by the Jews for ceremonial washing. By the social rules of the day each guest was expected to wash his hands before eating. Stone jars, according to rabbinic law, were best used for this because unlike clay jars, they could not be contaminated. These were also huge jars that could hold 20-30 gallons of water. Do the math—these puppies would soon be holding 120-180 gallons of wine! That's a pretty sweet wedding gift!

The water, now turned into wine, is given to the master of the banquet, the guy in charge of the food. He takes a sip and his eyes light up as he savors the body, complexity, and tannins of the best wine he has ever tasted. He says, "*Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now*" (v. 10). John wants to emphasize the quality and timing of this wine. Anything served before this wine are inferior. It's all box wine before Jesus! The wine Jesus provides is far superior as is everything that is tied to the new kingdom Jesus is introducing.

### **The Meaning: Jesus Reveals His Glory and the Disciples Believed in Him**

What's this story all about? At the most basic level, this story reveals how the new wine Jesus brings surpasses the plain water of Judaism. The Jewish vessels of purification are now being filled with new things; better things. The wine that's been served already through Jewish religion and ritual is exhausted and Jesus' new wine is replacing it. This is true of religion in general. Jesus changes the water of religion into the wine of his kingdom, and it's more and it's better. Religion can't purify us from sin. Religion can make you look good with its list of dos and don'ts. It can wash the outside of your life, but it can't cleanse you deep within. Only Jesus can heal the human heart.

In verse 11, John summarizes and explains the significance of Jesus turning water into wine. "*What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory and this disciples believed in him.*" John often refers to Jesus' works as "signs." The first eleven chapters of John are sometimes called the book of signs. This is the first sign, the first miracle, one of seven signs Jesus performs. A sign points

to something. A sign gets our attention. A big red octagon with the letters STOP should tell us to stop. It's not a suggestion; it's a law, even though sometimes I think it means I should slow down and if no one is around keep going! Jesus' miracles are signs, pointing to something about his person and ministry. Jesus never does a miracle to show off his power or to impress the masses. They were done to point beyond the miracle to something and someone much greater. These signs reveal that God is at work and present in Jesus. The new wine is here and Jesus wants us to come and drink.

In this miracle, this sign, Jesus reveals his glory and the disciples believed in him. What does it mean that Jesus revealed his glory? When we think of glory we think of something amazing. Like the glory of winning the Super Bowl. To understand glory we need to know more about Jesus. Jesus is not just a man, he is also God. John has already told us that he is the Word become flesh. Jesus reveals the presence of God and radiates his light in a dark world. To know God is to know Jesus. To know Jesus is to know God. Jesus reveals to the world God's glory.

Not everyone recognized God's glory though. In this story the servants saw the sign but not the glory. It was the disciples who not only saw the sign but by faith saw God's glory behind the sign. In response to the miracle, the disciples believed in him. They put their faith in Jesus. Even though the entire town enjoyed the wine, only a handful of men understood the significance of God's glory. And we'll see that's the way it was with Jesus' ministry. Many people saw the signs but not his glory. As we continue to go through the Gospel of John, we'll also see that Jesus' glory was tied to the cross. His glory will be fully revealed at the cross through his death and resurrection.

### **What To Do When the Wine Runs Out**

I know you didn't come this morning ready to hear about ancient Jewish weddings. I want to end by giving us three applications of this miracle for our lives. What do we do when the wine runs out? First, when the wine runs out, bring the problem to Jesus who provides abundantly for his people's needs. What strikes me about this story is that Jesus didn't really have to do anything. It wouldn't be the first or last time wine ran out at a wedding. What we see here is a person who cares deeply not just about heavenly things, but earthly problems as well. Sometimes it's hard for us to understand God not only meeting our need but providing for us an abundance.

This is a story of God's grace and there is no measure to his grace. There will always be enough grace to meet our every need. God is not just a God of the required, he is a God of abundance. Those jars were filled to the brim with choice, Opus One, Stags Leap, Silver Oak, Jordan type of wine, 180 gallons of it! He's saved the

best for last. Jesus **is** the new wine. When you come to him, in faith, he pours out his love and forgiveness into your life. This doesn't mean that all your "wants" will be provided for, but your "needs" will. This also doesn't mean that you won't struggle to pay the bills or that your health will always be on the up and up. Life is hard. There's no way around it. But, when the wine runs out, we can go to the source of new wine.

Second, when the wine runs out, ask Jesus to fill you. This entire story is about joy. Wine in the Old Testament was symbolic of joy and God's blessing (Psalm 104:14–15, Prov 3:10). At the Lord's Supper, Jesus even told his disciples that he will not drink from the fruit of the vine until the day when he drinks it new with us in our Father's Kingdom (Matt 26:27–29). The picture of that heavenly banquet is one of great joy. To the Jewish people wine symbolized joy. The Jewish rabbis had a saying, "Without wine there is no joy."

The danger in this life is that our wine can run out. For those of you who do not know Jesus Christ personally, life can be empty and purposeless without him. You've tried to fill your life with other things and still no joy. Even for those who are following Jesus, our wine can run out. Divorce, disease, rebellious teenage children, heartache and pain can dry up the wine and joy in our lives. It truly is a scary thing when the wine runs out. You and I have no resource available within ourselves to replace the joy. Only new wine—joy—can come from Jesus Christ.

There is a great new children's book out called *Thoughts to Make Your Heart Sing*, by Sally Lloyd-Jones. If you have small children, I highly recommend it. She writes (I'm paraphrasing), "When we make a big deal about God. When we "glorify" him. We are filled with joy. God created us so he could share his joy with us. He knows it's the thing your heart most needs to be happy. When God says, "Glorify me!", he's really saying, "Be filled with Joy!" God wants you to be filled with joy! Have you found joy in your life? Has your life brought joy to others? If you are out of wine, out of joy this morning, ask Jesus to fill you to the brim.

Lastly, when the wine runs out, remember Jesus is still turning water into wine. I am a firm believer that Jesus still does miracles. I think his greatest miracles happen when he transforms people into new creations. Jesus didn't just doctor up the water so it tasted like wine. No, the water in those pots was transformed into the finest wine people had ever tasted. The principle for us is this, Jesus is not going to doctor up our lives a little bit. He's not going to put a Band-Aid on our needs. He wants to completely transform your life, just like he transformed the water. Our lives will take on a new nature. Jesus has the power to transform you and change you into the people he's created you to be. Like the disciples, do you see his glory? Are you ready to believe in him

and follow him all the way to the cross? Jesus is still turning water into wine.

Chris August, a popular Christian artist, wrote these moving lyrics to a song he titled *Water into Wine*:

I've been runnin' round in circles,  
but I can't do this on my own  
To be so far away from perfect,  
that's all I've ever known  
It's not like I ain't been tryin',  
'cause I've been trying every door  
And when they'd open I'd be lyin' on the floor  
'cause I'm always falling short

I guess I thought that it'd be easy  
'cause people always speak of peace  
And now I'm picking up the pieces left of me  
'cause I can see that it was You breaking me

I knew about the story revealing all Your glory  
How You can take the nothing and turn it into something  
But now I see my own life changing before my eyes  
You saw me at my worst and fulfilled my thirst  
Like water into wine

I've been lost chasing dreams of yesterday  
Found my heart always leading me astray  
So take these broken wings and teach them to fly  
'Cause You're changing me from water into wine  
From water into wine

*This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.*

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