



Jesus says, “Come and See. I will blow your minds.” In the scriptures today we’re going to read of the time when Jesus turned water to wine at the wedding in Cana. This is a story you’re probably familiar with because it is recorded as Jesus’ first miracle. It’s a popular miracle. As we study this passage of scripture, I think you’re going to be encouraged by what this means to us today and intrigued by the theological shift Jesus was making.

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 (John 2:1–2).

These two verses are setting the scene for us. The situation is a wedding. More specifically, this is the party associated with the wedding. It’s the modern day equivalent to the wedding reception. The difference is, the wedding receptions in the Ancient Near East typically lasted a week.

Think of that! A week of partying. A week off from work. A week of eating and drinking. A week of the groom’s family paying the bill for everyone! Imagine the expense. Food, drinks, servants and entertainment for an entire week. The average wedding in America today costs \$20,000. Multiply that by five days!

Jesus and five of his disciples have been invited: Andrew, Simon Peter, Phillip, Nathanael, John the Apostle (the author of John).

When the wine was gone, Jesus’ mother said to him, “they have no more wine” (v. 3).

This was a tragedy, a shameful turn of events in our story. Running out of wine! How can the party keep going? If we’re throwing a party and we run out of food or drinks, that’s a bit embarrassing. In those days it was worse. And they didn’t have CVS or Trader Joe’s available for a quick trip. Wine was their primary beverage and its effect made everyone happy at this joyful occasion.

There was a Rabbinical saying, “where there is no wine, there is no feast.” Instead of a celebration, this party is about to turn ugly. To put this into context, some historians say that this would have been so shameful to the bride’s family that they could have sued the groom’s family for the embarrassment.

Jesus’ mother appears to have some role of organizing this wedding party because she’s aware of the situation and seems to feel responsible to solve it. So she tells Jesus, “they have no more wine.”

“Woman, why do you involve me?” Jesus replied.

“My hour has not yet come” (v. 4).

This is a strange response from Jesus. He obviously does not like the expectation Mary lays on him to solve this situation. But instead of looking at this as a rude way to respond to his mother, we should keep in mind that Jesus **never** acted according to people’s expectations. He was free from human advice, agenda or manipulation. Instead, he did the will of the Father **only**.

“By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.” (John 5:30).

“The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him” (John 8:29).

Jesus says, “My hour has not yet come.” Mary didn’t say anything about hours or time. All she did was inform Jesus that the wine had run out. Yet Jesus’ mind is on another topic altogether—his hour. His mind is preoccupied with the start of his ministry. He’s like a man on the starting line, crouched and ready to run a 3-year race. He’s like an orator, standing off stage, moments from taking the stage to deliver the most important speech of his life.

John is using a rhetoric device called Internal Prolepsis, introduction to a theme that will be developed later. It’s designed to capture the reader’s attention and curiosity. Hmmm. What does “my hour has not yet come” mean?” He uses the phrase “not yet” 12 times in his book.

“At this they tried to seize him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his hour had not yet come” (John 7:30).

“He spoke these words while teaching in the temple courts near the place where the offerings were put. Yet no one seized him, because his hour had not yet come” (John 8:20).

What does that mean? Not until John 12 do we learn that “the hour” has finally come. It happens when a group of Greeks and Gentiles come to see Jesus.

And Jesus says, “Jesus replied, ‘The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified’” (John 12:23).

He goes on to talk about his death on the cross and his resurrection. His hour, his time to fully reveal his glory, is his death and resurrection. And all of the signs Jesus performed during his three years of ministry pointed to this event.

What Jesus is saying to Mary in our passage today is this, “Woman, I’m not ready to die yet. I’m not ready to give them the full joy I have prepared for them, yet.”

Poor Mary. All she did was tell Jesus the wine had run out! Despite Jesus’ strange response to Mary, in verse 5 she tells the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.” She’s probably heard Jesus say weird things before, right? She might even be thinking, “Don’t let my son’s strange response throw you off, just do whatever he tells you.”

His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you” (v. 5).

We have no idea why Mary said this. Did she suspect Jesus was going to do a miracle? We just don’t know. The safest and most reliable reading of this verse is to take it at face value: Mary turned to Jesus for help and was willing to live with whatever he decided to do.

It would be incorrect to conclude from this that Mary possessed the ability to move Jesus to act, although Jesus was unwilling to do so. This is how Catholics have misinterpreted this passage of scripture and incorrectly taught that people can bring their requests to Mary and she has an “in” with Jesus, as if she can get him to do things he didn’t want to do otherwise.

I think Jesus gave this slight rebuke to Mary because he was intending to do a miracle but he didn’t want anyone to misunderstand why. This is how I make sense of Jesus saying, “My hour has not yet come” and then proceeds to turn water to wine. Mary was thinking about wine, and only wine. Mary was thinking about the drink in a cup. Mary was thinking about how happy everybody was and that everyone was about to become sad when they realized the wine had run out.

In contrast, Jesus was thinking about what the wine represented. The wine represented the True Joy that only he could provide. Jesus saw that the looming unhappiness of the wedding attendees was a perfect analogy for our lives because all of us are seeking joy from the wrong places. All of us are seeking joy from sources that will run out. Every one of us wants something

severely—we chase a new car, new house, kids, a Championship football team, better vacations. The problem is, the new “thing” becomes the “normal” thing. It does not satisfy. We realize we’ll never get it.

There are four responses when this happens:

» Blame the things—I need a new spouse, new job, new body, new vacation, etc.

» Blame yourself—the reason I don’t have it is I made bad choices, I didn’t live up to the standard. There’s something wrong with me, because everyone around me looks so happy. What do I do about it? Try harder. People like this live with self doubt.

» Blame the universe—you kill the part of yourself that dreams. You become a cynic.

» Blame your separation from God.

CS Lewis writes: “Creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for those desires exists. A baby feels hunger: well, there is such a thing as food. A duckling wants to swim: well, there is such a thing as water. Men feel sexual desire: well, there is such a thing as sex. If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world. If none of my earthly pleasures satisfy it, that does not prove that the universe is a fraud. Probably earthly pleasures were never meant to satisfy it, but only to arouse it, to suggest the real thing.”

There is a joy shortage. Jesus is the supply for the joy shortage. Only Jesus is able to give us true and eternal joy. Jesus sees that this is the perfect time to perform his first sign.

Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, (washing hands, feet, dishes, utensils, bowls, cups) each holding from twenty to thirty gallons (120-180 gallons combined). Jesus said to the servants, “Fill the jars with water”; so they filled them to the brim (verses 6–7).

Why? The stone jars and the ceremonial washing was part of the old order of Jewish law and tradition. Jesus is about to show them all of these laws and ceremonies bring death. In fact, everything you are pursuing is going to bring you disappointment and death.

Filling the jars with water “to the brim” indicates the fullest power these Jewish ceremonial cleansings possessed. Just as you can’t put any more water in the stone jars, you can’t get any additional power out of the ceremonial washings.

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” (verses 8–10).

The party is rescued. Jesus turns the looming sadness to joy! Jesus' supply is better than the original. When Jesus did his first miraculous sign, he was revealing what he was really about. Jesus is about bringing joy! He created 100+ gallons of unusually good wine.

If you don't understand this, then you don't understand Jesus. Christianity is not a bargain. It's not a pinched life. It's not a kill-joy. Christians should not be party killers. We should be filled with joy because we know the true joy giver. We think we know how to make ourselves happy. But we're like kids playing with tinker toys and Jesus is the master architect.

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. (v. 11).

John records seven signs in his book. These signs were not random acts of power. They were powerful and true, but they were also steeped with meaning and symbolism, intended to reveal his glory. And in this story Jesus is revealing to us one main idea: Jesus brings true joy.

There are two groups of people this message applies to today:

The first person is facing a circumstance right now that is stealing your joy one bite at a time. You're facing something really difficult and you're struggling to experience joy.

The second person isn't facing something particularly difficult but you are turning to false sources to find your joy, that new thing.

The response is the same for both:

Turn to Jesus and ask for his true joy. If you're facing a difficulty, admit that “That” might not change, that your joy-killer might be a piece of baggage you carry the rest of your life. Yet Jesus can give you his perfect joy in the midst of it.

If you're turning to a false source for your joy, turn away from any hope that it will satisfy you and instead turn to him now, confessing your propensity to search for joy in the wrong places and ask him to fill us with his Perfect Joy.

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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