

From Water to Wine

Jn 2:1-11

I. INTRODUCTION.

A. Some weddings are weird.

1. Michelle is a Michigan woman who works at 7-11.
 - a. She loves her customers, her work and her fiancé.
 - b. So she married him on the asphalt outside the 7-11 carrying her bouquet in a Super Big Gulp cup.
 - c. At the reception, hot dogs and Slurpees were served at reduced prices.
2. In Maine, one couple first met at their town transfer station—locally known as The Dump.
 - a. He had just starting working there. She had just brought her first recyclables.
 - b. They plan to be married where they met while standing in the bucket loader.
 - Town folk have been donating returnable bottles to build a honeymoon fund.
 - The couple is seeking ways to incorporate recycled objects into their wedding outfits. They just cannot wait to say “I do” at The Dump.

B. In our text this evening, we read of a strange wedding. The wedding isn’t strange because of where it’s located—it takes place in Cana of Galilee. It is strange, however, because of what happens there—the Son of God turns water into wine.

1. READ TEXT. (THREE SLIDES).
2. This whole idea has troubled Christians for years: Since Scripture often condemns drunkenness, how could the perfect Son of God make wine?
3. While I don’t want us to get bogged down in that question tonight, I do want to offer a couple suggestions.
 - a. The people of Jesus’ day apparently had four ways to keep grape juice from fermenting—Since the term “wine” in Greek references both alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages, it’s certainly possible that is what Jesus made.
 - b. Yet, it is also quite possible that Jesus did make wine with limited alcohol content.
 - While the ancients were aware of procedures to keep wine from fermenting, left to itself grape juice is going to ferment.
 - However,
 - Faithful Jews did not drink wine alone, but they mixed it with water.
 - Plutarch said, “We call a mixture ‘wine’ although the larger of the component parts is water.”
 - From a Jewish source about 60 BC we read that “it is harmful to drink wine alone, or again, to drink water alone, while wine mixed with water is sweet and delicious, and enhances one’s enjoyment.”
 - The water and wine were mixed generally between 3-to-1 or even 20-to-1 ratios.
 - Robert H. Stein, who has studied this subject extensively wrote, “It is possible to become intoxicated from wine mixed with three parts of water, but one’s drinking would probably affect the bladder long before it affected the mind.”
 - That may be part of the reason we find a condemnation for “those who tarry *long* over wine” (Prov 23:30).
 - Additionally, the Jews added nothing to the wine to make it intoxicating.
 - You are not at all talking about wine like we know today. Not only was it diluted, but it had a very, very minor alcohol content.
 - Greeks added herbal toxins to wine to become drunk; devout Jews abhorred such a practice.
 - c. Therefore, the question as to whether or not this wine had alcoholic content is really irrelevant, because drinking first-century wine in a Jewish way would get you nowhere near intoxication.

- C. What is of far more significance in this narrative is the effect this sign had on Jesus' disciples.
1. We read: "This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him" (v 11).
 2. The whole purpose of John's Gospel is to produce faith: "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (Jn 20:30-31).
 3. Tonight, we wish to examine this miracle to increase our faith & specifically that we might learn important lessons from the miracle.

II. JESUS BELIEVES IN WEDDINGS, vv 1-2.

- A. Jesus' mother as well as Jesus himself and his disciples are invited to a wedding in Cana of Galilee.
1. There are two possible sites of Cana—one is three miles from Nazareth & the other is eight miles from Nazareth.
 - a. Thus, because of the close proximity of Cana to Nazareth, it's quite possible that Jesus & his family knew this family quite well.
 - b. In the ancient world, there was nothing like eloping.
 - You wanted to have as big a wedding as possible, and thus you invited as many guests as was humanly possible.
 - You especially wanted to invite Jewish teachers, and Jesus, although he has done no miracles, is one by this point. We know that Jesus is known as a Jewish teacher at this point, for he has called disciples, the first step in becoming a teacher in first-century Palestine.
 2. The fact that Jesus attends this wedding demonstrates his approval of weddings.
- B. Another proof that Jesus approves of weddings is the fact that he turns the water into wine.
1. Weddings in the ancient world lasted for seven days, and the host was expected to provide plenty of wine for all of his guests for that length of time.
 2. Running out of wine at your wedding was a major, major faux pas in this time period.
 - a. This couple & their parents would have been the talk of the town for years to come. People would have been saying, "You remember when we went to their wedding? They ran out of wine."
 - b. Jesus steps up and saves them that embarrassment by turning water into wine.
- C. We know that God—and his Son—think highly of marriage.
1. It was God himself who performed the first wedding ceremony!
 2. Jesus spoke highly of marriage:
 - a. "'A man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh' [.] So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate" (Mt 19:5-6).
 - b. "I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery" (Mt 19:9).
 3. What is our view of marriage?
 - a. How highly do we regard the vows we made to our spouse in God's presence?
 - b. How committed are we to loving our spouse—not just when it feels good—but all the time, because we know it's right?

III. JESUS CARED DEEPLY FOR HIS MOTHER, vv 2-5.

- A. When Mary learns that the wine is gone, she informs Jesus.
1. At ancient weddings, the women's quarters were near where the wine was kept, thus she learns of the shortage before Jesus.
 2. Mary's words imply that she expected Jesus to do something to help the situation.
 - a. Weddings in the ancient world—as now—were quite expensive, and the guests were expected to help defray the cost.

- b. Some have suggested that Mary may not be asking for a miracle but simply asking Jesus to go and buy some wine.
- B. Jesus says to her, "Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come," v 4.
 - 1. "Woman" sounds so harsh in our vernacular.
 - a. I remember going to visit one gentleman in KY who always referred to his wife as "Woman" in the rudest manner: "Woman, get in here!"; "Woman, get me something to drink!"
 - b. "Woman" in Jesus' day was something like we would use "Ma'am."
 - 2. Jesus also says, "What does this have to do with me?"
 - a. That expression in the NT is literally "What to me and to you?" The Gr idiom is quite like our idioms "I'm not going to lose any sleep over it" & "It's no skin off my nose." The idea is "It's not my problem & I'm not worried about it."
 - b. Jesus' point is: "They've run out of wine, but I'm the Son of God, and I've got bigger fish to fry than to be concerned that there isn't wine at this wedding."
 - 3. Jesus isn't concerned about the lack of wine at the wedding, for his "hour has not yet come."
 - a. "Hour" in John's Gospel refers almost exclusively to the cross.
 - b. Jesus seems to be saying here, "Mom, once I begin doing miracles, I'm on the road to the cross, and it's not quite time for that."
- C. But, Mary tells the servants, "Do whatever he tells you," v 5. Mary knows her Son, she knows he loves her, and she knows that he's going to honor her.
- D. Here's the point of all this: Jesus doesn't really want to do this miracle, because (a) his signs need to be more important than helping a bride & groom escape embarrassment on their wedding day; and (b) it's not yet time to start moving toward Golgotha. But, he does this because he respects his mother.
 - 1. Respect for mothers is so very important.
 - a. "Cursed by anyone who dishonors his father or his mother" (Deut 27:16).
 - b. "The eye that mocks a father and scorns to obey a mother will be picked out by the ravens of the valley and eaten by the vultures" (Prov 30:17).
 - 2. Do we honor our mothers?
 - a. When Mom needs something done around the house, are we more than willing to do what we can?
 - b. When Mom needs that ride to the doctor, are we more than willing to give up our time to care for her?
 - c. Are we truly honoring our mothers?

IV. PRAYER IS POWERFUL.

- A. Of course, in the most literal sense there isn't a prayer at all in this text; however, Mary asks Jesus to do something and he does.
- B. What's so amazing is that Jesus changes his mind here.
 - 1. I understand it's odd to think in terms of Jesus' changing his mind, but it's quite obvious he doesn't want to do this.
 - a. He says to Mary, "What does this have to do with me?" He's saying, "I don't have a dog in this fight. This isn't my problem to solve."
 - b. He also says to Mary, "My hour has not yet come." It's not yet time for him to begin moving closer to the cross.
 - 2. God has a long history of acting in response to prayer.
 - a. When God revealed to Abraham that Sodom was going to be destroyed, Abraham begged the Lord to save the city if at least ten righteous people were found in the city. The Lord agreed.
 - b. "The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit" (Js 5:16-18).
 - c. There is a clear passage where God acts totally contrary to the way he had planned.
 - King Hezekiah was very ill & at the point of death. God sent Isaiah to say to him, "Set your house in order, for you shall die; you shall not recover" (2 Ki 20:1).

- Isaiah turns his face to the wall, weeps and cries, and the Lord decides to heal him.
 - What's so interesting is that Isaiah was on his way out of the palace courts when the Lord changed his mind.
 - "Before Isaiah had gone out of the middle court, the word of the LORD came to him: 'Turn back, and say to Hezekiah the leader of my people, Thus says the LORD, the God of David your father: I have heard your prayer; I have seen your tears. Behold, I will heal you. On the third day you shall go up to the house of the LORD, and I will add fifteen years to your life' (2 Ki 20:4-6).
 - I almost feel sorry for Isaiah. The Lord has given him a quite difficult assignment—go and tell the King that he's going to die.
 - Isaiah has performed his task, he's on his way home, he hasn't even left the palace, & the Lord says, "Wait a minute. Go back and tell the king he's going to live."
- 3. One man said, "The angel fetched Peter out of prison, but it was prayer that fetched the angel." Do we believe in the power of prayer?

V. MIRACLES PRODUCE FAITH.

- A. Notice the reaction of Jesus' disciples: "This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him" (v 11).
- B. It is often the case that there is much circular reasoning when it comes to increasing our faith through miracles.
 - 1. We might be tempted to say, for example, I believe the Bible because of the miracles & I believe the miracles because I believe the Bible.
 - 2. Such circular reasoning is not really intellectually honest—let alone, it will make no impact on unbelievers.
- C. How do we get around this circular reasoning?
 - 1. In the first place, we must understand that the Gospels were written shortly after the events narrated in them took place.
 - a. The Gospel of John was written about AD 90, but the others all seem to have been written prior to AD 70.
 - b. Therefore, when these Gospels began to circulate, people could have said, "Wait a minute! This isn't the way things happened. Jesus never healed a lame man or raised the dead or whatever."
 - c. Had people started to come out of the woodwork and declare that the Gospels were filled with fraudulent tales, what type of impact would these books have had on the world?
 - 2. Jesus did his miracles in public.
 - a. When Jesus turned the water to wine, it's not as though he took some water into the back room & then came out with wine and told everyone he had turned it from water to wine.
 - b. The servants filled the water pots & it was they who drew out water to take it to the master of the feast.
 - c. There's no trickery, no sleight of hand, but Jesus performed his miracles in full view of people.
 - 3. Jesus' miracles were often performed on people who had been diseased from birth.
 - a. In John 5, Jesus heals a man who had been lame for 38 years; in John 9, Jesus heals a man who was born blind.
 - b. How different that is from modern faith-healers! Typically, people are screened for who can and cannot get in such a place to be healed.
 - 4. Do we believe that Jesus is the Christ because of the miracles he performed?