

John 2.1-12 / COB / 02.09.14

Video 12.53-16.07

Introduction

† **[Slide 1: Title]** Let's pray...

- We are in the gospel of John, chapter two, if you want to turn there in your Bible.
- † What if God suddenly gave you the ability to do miracles? My understanding from the Bible is that if God gave you the spiritual gift of miracles, it would remain under God's control and guidance; it would be God doing the miracles through you.
 - But what if – just as he granted one wish from Solomon – God allowed you to do one miracle of your own choosing? What miracle would you perform to declare to the world that you had this gift and new ministry? [seek responses]
 - All of you are compassionate and altruistic. I was thinking I would stand here and suddenly grow hair!
- † What Jesus did for his first miracle, as his declaration of identity and ministry, was very different. Sure, we all know this as his first miracle, and it is not famous or even infamous; but at the time, this was very subtle; a whisper, not a shout. Only a few knew it had happened and even fewer understood, and that makes it even more interesting to ask what it might mean. So let's take a look at this event, and see if we can figure out its significance.

[Slide 2: 2.1-2 with map] John 2.1-2 [NET]: Now on the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, and Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the wedding.

- † We saw last week that Jesus was walking from Batanea to Galilee, and now we see that within Galilee he was headed to Cana for a wedding celebration, and he arrived on the third day, which could mean two or three days after he started, since the Jews often included the day you started.
 - You can see Cana here on this map. It was about nine miles from Nazareth, where Jesus grew up, and like Nazareth was an insignificant rural village.
 - **[Slide 3: 2.1-2 with picture]** However, if we look at this picture of the most likely spot for Cana [the village no longer exists] we can see it was on the edge of a fertile plain, just at the start of the foothills. Very rural, but probably the people were well enough off.
- † Some scholars note that Mary was “there” at the wedding while Jesus was “invited,” and thus speculate that she was part of the administration of the festivities. There is no way of knowing for sure, but – as we will see – she does try to help when a problem arises.
- † It is strange that Jesus' disciples were invited. The way the Greek is phrased, the emphasis is on Jesus being invited, like saying, “Jesus was invited, along with his disciples.” So perhaps only Jesus was invited, but he was allowed to bring guests. This too would be strange.

- Since he was just starting his public ministry and was not a prominent prophet or teacher in any sense yet, we wonder that he was allowed to bring his disciples. This privilege – along with Mary possibly being involved in the festivities – leads many scholars to believe that the wedding must have been for a family friend or a relative.
- But all that is just background. The important fact here is that family and friends would travel from all over the countryside to come and stay and celebrate together, and the celebration festivities could last up to a week. We’ll see why that is important next...

[Slide 4: 2.3-5] John 2.3-5: When the wine ran out, Jesus' mother said to him, “They have no wine left.” Jesus replied, “Woman, why are you saying this to me? My time has not yet come.” His mother told the servants, “Whatever he tells you, do it.”

- † The best commentary I have ever read on any book of the Bible is the one D.A. Carson wrote about the gospel of John. In this commentary, Carson said, “A wedding celebration could last as long as a week, and the financial responsibility lay with the groom... To run out of supplies would be a dreadful embarrassment...[and] there is some evidence that it could also lay the groom open to a lawsuit from aggrieved relatives of the bride” [*The Gospel According to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary, 169].
 - LeeAnn and I had a reception for three hours and we ran out of finger sandwiches! All I had at the reception was a glass of iced tea, and LeeAnn didn’t even get that.
 - I can see how it would be embarrassing to run out of refreshments at such a celebration, and it would be impossible to get more on short notice in such a remote little village. But I find it amusing that in this culture LeeAnn’s relatives might have sued me for embarrassing the family! I don’t think anyone in LeeAnn’s family drinks wine, but they might complain if we ran out of roasted meat...
- † When the wine ran out, Mary came to tell Jesus about it. Why? Was she looking for a miracle? Probably not. We get the impression that Jesus did not start doing miracles until this very day. Maybe she thought of Jesus as a capable and reliable man who loved her, and so was sharing her burden with him, whether or not she thought he could help.
- † **[Slide 5: woman]** When he answered her, Jesus called his mother “Woman.” It was not rude in that culture to address a lady in this way, but it was unusual to address your mother like that, so we still wonder at it.
 - Throughout the gospels, Jesus seems to distance himself from his mother, despite showing love for her. Some scholars speculate that Jesus needed to help Mary see him not as her son but as her Savior, now that he had begun his ministry.
 - Also, some postulate that Jesus needed to be declarative that he would be under no human guidance now that he was fully to be guided by the Holy Spirit in ministry.
 - Maybe he was just sassing her, like I have been known to sass my mother; in a non-sinful way, of course.

- † **[Slide 6: idiom]** The NET Bible quotes Jesus as asking his mother, “Woman, why are you saying this to me?” Literally in Greek, what Jesus said was “What to me and to you?” This was an idiom from Hebrew which had become common in Greek.
 - According to the NET Bible translation notes, if someone was asked you to get involved in something you thought was none of your business, you might use this idiom to say, “That is your business, how am I involved?”
- † **[Slide 7: time]** Jesus also told his mother, “My time has not yet come.” If Mary was not asking for a miracle, then Jesus is answering a more profound question than she was asking. The video makes it seem like she knows something special is coming when she tells the servants to do whatever Jesus says, but I can picture my mother rolling her eyes at my sassiness as she dismissed what I said and told the servants I would find a way to help.
 - What time does Jesus mean has not come yet? That is part of the suspense of the narrative. Jesus and the author John will refer to “his time” as not yet come several more times until all of a sudden Jesus will say his time has arrived!

[Slide 8: 2.6 with jars] John 2.6: Now there were six stone water jars there for Jewish ceremonial washing, each holding twenty or thirty gallons.

- † The Jews had a lot of customs about ritual purification, to symbolically cover up their defilement from sin. At this wedding, servants would have poured water over the hands of guests to purify them from defilement.
 - Each of the six stone water jars held two or three μετρητής, which is roughly eighteen to twenty-seven gallons; English translations seem to prefer round numbers, so they say twenty to thirty.
 - The need for six water pots with 100-150 gallons of water for ceremonial washing seems to indicate a large guest list: lots of embarrassment if there is no more wine.

[Slide 9: 2.7-10] John 2.7-10: Jesus told the servants, “Fill the water jars with water.” So they filled them up to the very top. Then he told them, “Now draw some out and take it to the head steward,” and they did. When the head steward tasted the water that had been turned to wine, not knowing where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), he called the bridegroom and said to him, “Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the cheaper wine when the guests are drunk. You have kept the good wine until now!”

- † We really are talking about wine, not grape juice. We know that from biblical descriptions, external historical documentation, and archaeological evidence of the use of wine in this culture.
 - Even in this passage it is made clear that at such festivities some guests might become drunk or intoxicated. Many English translations take pains to avoid saying this by using other terminology such as the guests having drunk freely, having drunk a lot, or having well drunk, but the verb μεθύσκω means to cause someone to become inebriated or

intoxicated. We shouldn't deny that. Never deny something God has revealed as true! Explain it instead.

- To be sure, they were drinking wine that was diluted to between one-third and one-tenth of its fermented strength. Because it was so diluted, people could drink more of it without becoming intoxicated, but that was a problem for the bridegroom, because you thus needed to provide even more volume of wine.
 - Also to be sure, Jesus was not condoning drunkenness. Jesus always obeyed God's Law, which prohibited drunkenness. In Genesis, Noah's drunkenness after the ark is parallel in the Bible narrative to Adam and Eve accepting advice from the snake: in both cases, they sinned by allowing creation to influence them, instead of representing God to the rest of creation.
 - It is worth noting that there is nothing in this text to say that people at this celebration were drunk, just the implication that sometimes this would happen at weddings, which we all know to be true.
- † According to the head steward, Jesus made excellent wine. I am not surprised. If Jesus came today, he probably could out race Jesse in his Formula One video game and outplay Carol on her bass; that's just who Jesus is.
- † Here is a question: from where did the servants draw the water that became wine? Most people assume the servants filled the water jugs and then drew water out of those jugs and found it was wine.
- But the Greek verb ἀντλήω might imply they drew more water out of the well. If that is the case, we have to wonder how much they drew out that became wine. But even if they drew from the water jugs, we still have to wonder was it just a ladleful that became wine or all of one jug, or all 100-something gallons?
 - As we will see in a moment, when talking about the significance of this miracle, if Jesus is symbolizing his own provision under the new covenant and trying to help the groom avoid embarrassment, then he would have provided plenty of wine.

[Slide 10: 2.11-12 and map] John 2.11-12: Jesus did this as the first of his miraculous signs, in Cana of Galilee. In this way 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, and they stayed there a few days.

- † When the wedding celebration was over, Jesus, his mother, his brothers, and his disciples went down out of the hills to Capernaum, which is on the Sea of Galilee. This would become the home base for Jesus' ministry in Galilee.
- † But before going, Jesus did this first of his miraculous signs, turning the water into wine. This first miraculous sign concluded the first week of Jesus' public ministry, according to the times given in John's gospel.

- As we noted earlier, it was not a grand act for everyone to see, but a subtle one. The setting was not the Temple or a palace, but at a country wedding of common people in an obscure small village in Galilee. We should consider what this tells us about Jesus.

- † **[Slide 11: wine flow]** There is significant symbolism associated with this miracle. Many of the messianic promises God made to Israel await final fulfillment until Christ returns, but while he walked the Earth Jesus gave signs to show that he was the one who would bring fulfillment.
 - The prophets foretold a time of deliverance, when wine would flow plentifully in Israel as a result of the Messiah [Jeremiah 31.10-14; Amos 9.13-14]. So this sign miracle pointed to Jesus' identity as the Messiah deliverer for Israel.

- † **[Slide 12: groom]** The wedding also holds symbolism. As we will see in a couple of weeks, John the Baptist refers to Jesus symbolically as the bridegroom [John 3.29]. In his book Revelation, the apostle John revealed the church to be the bride [Revelation 19.7]. The apostle Paul also elaborated on the relationship between Christ and the church as bridegroom and bride [Ephesians 5].
 - At this wedding, Jesus made good the deficiency of the bridegroom's provision, in anticipation of the perfect way he would provide while fulfilling his role as the bridegroom to the church, supplying us with salvation, cleansing, and spiritual protection.

- † **[Slide 13: water pot]** Even the water pots are significant in this miracle. With his death, Jesus was ushering in a new era in the relationship between God and people, one he and the prophets before him called the New Covenant.
 - The water pots being filled to the brim before the miracle might symbolize that the time for ritual purification in water under the Mosaic Covenant had been fulfilled and now began the time to draw purification from a new source. In this new covenant, Jesus offers us a permanent cleansing in God's sight by grace through faith in him.
 - As we heard at communion last week, at the last supper before his crucifixion, Jesus used wine to symbolize the new covenant he was ushering in through his blood sacrifice on the cross. So this first miracle indicates that the New Covenant era was at hand.
 - The prophets spoke of the New Covenant as far back as Moses when he was writing the old covenant. God promised this New Covenant would include God cleansing us so that we could properly love him; God transforming us so we could obey him; God forgiving us permanently and completely; God sending the Holy Spirit to dwell with us; and ultimately God restoring Israel. We enjoy partial fulfillment of this covenant now, and will see it completely fulfilled when Christ returns.

- † Doing this miracle, Jesus thus revealed a hint of his glory and the disciples believed in him.
 - Not all who saw the miracle are said to believe, such as the servants, but those who knew him and were faithful toward God saw the sign and believed in Jesus.

Conclusion

- † **[Slide 14: Jesus]** What do we learn about Jesus this week?
 - First, Jesus was powerful enough to do miracles, to change creation/nature.
 - Second, Jesus is the bridegroom to the church, sacrificially providing salvation, cleansing, and protection.
 - Third, Jesus is the Messiah/Christ who will fulfill God's promises to deliver Israel to peace and prosperity, and who brings the New Covenant blessings, including permanent cleansing in God's sight.

- † How do we respond to what we are learning about Jesus? First, please, take some time to quietly reflect on what we are learning about Jesus.
 - If you don't do this, then I am wasting our time here with these sermons. I really believe it: that's how important reflection is for spiritual renewal and growth; studies show you could get 900% more out of a sermon if you did some follow up study and reflection on it.
 - So please review the devotions from the past few weeks, make notes that you could share with others, and prayerfully think about who Jesus is and what that means for you.

- † Second, allow this information about Jesus to inspire you to pursue your next step in faith.
 - It might be to believe in Jesus and the salvation he offers you.
 - It might be to receive baptism in water as a believer.
 - It might be to commit to joining our church family and ministry team.
 - It might be to join a small group or accept training or mentoring to accelerate your growth and understanding.
 - It might be to get involved in a ministry here at the church or out in the community.
 - It might be something else, unique to you.
 - Whatever it is, start praying and moving toward taking that step. And please let Mark, Jim, or me know if we can help you! It would make our day to help you take that step.

- † Let's pray...