

A Miraculous Wedding Gift
John 2:1-11
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Beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, the story that we read this evening is very familiar to us. Jesus turns water into wine. You boys and girls probably heard this story in Sunday school. It was Jesus' first miracle. This story is referred to in many other settings, too.

People will refer to this passage when they're debating about whether Christians may drink wine. The wine that Jesus produced here wasn't merely grape juice. It was clearly alcoholic. So Jesus was not a teetotaler, that's true. But beloved, that certainly is not the point of the passage.

People also use this passage in connection with marriage. In fact, our Form for the Solemnization of marriage says, "Our Lord Jesus honored marriage by His blessed presence at the wedding in Cana." And that's certainly true. But there's much more to it than that.

This story isn't in the Bible merely to prove to us that it's okay to drink wine or to testify that God approves of marriage. The main focus isn't on wine or weddings. It's on Jesus Christ as the glorious Messiah.

We know that this is the case because at the end of the account John explains the significance of the miracle. He says that through this miracle *Jesus revealed His glory, and His disciples put their faith in Him.*

That's what this passage is about—putting our faith and trust in Jesus...not Jesus the wine-drinker or Jesus the party-goer, but in *Jesus our Savior* who through this miracle revealed His power and His glory. So let's watch our Savior at work here, as **Jesus Christ Inaugurates His Earthly Ministry with a Miraculous Sign.** We'll notice from the text that, this sign...

- 1) **Occurs at an Appropriate Place;**
- 2) **Marks an Important Transition;**
- 3) **Produces a Bountiful Blessing.**

1) This Sign Occurs at an Appropriate Place

Now, vs. 1 tells us that *on the third day a wedding took place in Cana of Galilee*. This is not a reference to the days of the week. No. This is in reference to John 1: 43. This was the third day since Jesus met Phillip and Nathaniel and called them to follow Him. See, John is recording for us what Jesus did during the first week of His ministry (John mirrors Genesis—instead of telling us about the beginning of the world, He gives us the account of the beginning of the Word) .

On day 1, John the Baptist announces to the people that Jesus is coming (vs. 26-27); on day 2, Jesus appears and is introduced by John the Baptist as ‘The Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world’ (Vs. 29); on day 3, Christ calls first disciples; on day 4 Jesus calls Philip and Andrew to follow him. Then, three days later, on the 7th day, he is at a wedding feast in Cana.

Now the first thing we should ask of our text is this: “**Why** is *Jesus of Nazareth at a wedding*? What is he doing there? Well, we could say, he’s been invited. He’s being polite. We all attend weddings. Why should Jesus be any different?

And from the looks of things, the couple who was getting married was very likely a close friend of the family or possibly a relative; it appears that way because of the involvement of Jesus’ mother at the wedding feast. She seems to take personal responsibility for the shortage of wine.

So of course Jesus would come. But, did you ever stop to consider this? The forerunner of Jesus was none other than John the Baptist. Would he come to a wedding like this? Remember what the angel told John’s parents? He was not to take wine or any other fermented drink. And recall what Jesus said about John the Baptist: *John came neither eating bread nor drinking wine*.

John’s very existence and ministry was designed to prepare Israel for the coming of Jesus Christ. John’s abstaining from wine was a sign that Israel had not yet fully entered into the joys of God’s Kingdom (The OT says that ‘where there is wine there is joy’. But an absence of wine indicates a time of joylessness, a time of hardship, a time of falling away).

So there’s no way John the Baptist would ever be at a wedding. Yet, here Jesus is, and with Jesus are some of the same disciples who once followed John the Baptist. It’s quite possible that

Jesus' attendance raised questions in *their* minds. Their new teacher was radically different than their former one.

Maybe they wondered why he would waste his time coming to a wedding. After all, He has his work to attend to. Only a few days earlier John the Baptist *baptized* Jesus and announced (before the crowds at Bethany) that He was the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

So, why exactly is the Lamb of God, Israel's long awaited Messiah wasting His time at a wedding? Shouldn't he be out teaching and preaching and baptizing? Aren't there more important things to do with his time, and his disciple's time, than to engage in this kind of frivolity--feasting and enjoying a week long wedding bash? What a waste of precious time!

But the fact is, beloved, Jesus does not have anything better to do. He is at the wedding precisely because this is what he came to do. He is there because this is His calling. Jesus is there, because He is about to reveal His great power and glory as the *Christ*.

He is about to make a great and lasting impression on the guests at this wedding. And what more appropriate place, what more appropriate setting for Jesus to manifest Himself, for Jesus to glorify Himself as the Christ *than at a wedding?*

Weddings, as we know, are occasions of great rejoicing, of great celebration and joy. In fact, weddings in Jesus day were even more festive than ours. Wedding celebrations would ordinarily carry for 7 full days.

We can be certain that Jesus wasn't sitting off in a corner with his disciples at this feast, wearing a scowl on his face, grumbling to his disciples, telling them how much he hates weddings. Jesus was not shaking his head in disgust at all the fun and festivities that were going on.

As we know this would be the first of many feasts which Jesus would attend during his ministry. Jesus would attend the feast that his friend Lazarus arranged in his honor. Jesus would feast with tax collectors and sinners. Jesus would feast so much that the Pharisees would accuse him of being a glutton and a drunkard. Even in His preaching and parables, Jesus spoke of feasting and

weddings--comparing the Kingdom of God to a great wedding feast where there was eating and drinking and celebration.

So as Christians we ought to be able to understand and appreciate how appropriate it is that Jesus begins His ministry at a wedding. As Christians, we realize that a wedding, after all, a marriage between a husband and wife is but a symbol of the mystic union between Christ and His Church, between Christ and His bride—the bride which He bought with His own precious blood!

So think of that, every wedding we celebrate is a reminder of our salvation (even more reason to celebrate!). In John 10:10 Jesus said *I have come that they might have life, and have it to the full!* Christ's presence at the wedding is not only necessary for the sign that He's about to perform, but it is also necessary for His people to see His real purpose and goal in His ministry.

Our Lord came to *restore life*, to *restore joy*, to *restore happiness*, to *restore peace* within the hearts and lives of His people. It is strange that people who look at the Christian life from the outside view it as a joyless existence. What fun can Christians possibly have with all those rules and regulations? What fun can Christians have if they can't fool around a little bit?

But what people fail to see is that in Christ, we've been blessed with a deeper joy, with a greater happiness, with an unending satisfaction and fulfillment than we could ever find on this earth. Our Lord has walked the pathway of shame and suffering for our sake, to set us free—that we may have life, may enjoy it, may have it to the full both now and forevermore.

Following Jesus doesn't mean abandoning all joy and happiness. No. It means just the opposite. Following Jesus is the pathway to true joy and happiness. Christ came to make our joy complete. That's the glory of Jesus. That's why He's at this wedding.

2) This Sign Marks an Important Transition

So what better place for the Christ to inaugurate His earthly ministry, than at a festive event, at place of great joy and celebration? Secondly, we see that this miraculous Sign Marks a very important Transition. Here we deal with the *crisis* that develops at the wedding.

As the festivities roll along, Jesus' mother realizes that the wedding host is rapidly running out of wine. That's exactly what she tells Jesus (Not, "the wine is running low, but "*They* are running out of wine").

That's significant, because in Jesus' day, the bridegroom and his family were responsible for this celebration. If the father of the groom failed to provide adequate hospitality, the wife's family had legal grounds to file a complaint against the groom(not to mention a poor impression).

This was potentially a very embarrassing and shameful situation. I think we can identify with this. We've all been there, when we've had to entertain house guests only to realize that we don't have enough pop or chips or munchies to serve them. That can be very embarrassing.

But now, just imagine if you were throwing a wedding feast but only figured for half the amount of people at the reception. As salad and dinner is served, only half of your guests get served, while the others sit there with nothing. I imagine that some people would simply go home.

Now in this case we might argue, well it's only wine. No big deal. So long as there are still hors d'oeuvres and food, the party could go on. But we have to remember that wine was the drink for special feasts and celebrations. They didn't have the choice of beverages that we do today.

Without wine, there is no joy. So the problem is indeed very serious; this feast could come to a screeching halt. But notice what happens. Jesus' mother tells Him the problem. But why? What does she expect her son to do about it?

She wasn't asking Jesus to leave the party and buy more wine. She came to Him because she knew from His miraculous conception and birth that her Jesus was different. She knew what the angel said that her son was the Messiah, born to set His people free. She knew what the prophets like Amos said about the coming days when new wine would drip from the mountains and flow from the hills. (Isaiah: The Lord will prepare a banquet of wines).

And Mary must have noticed how things were happening. Jesus was on the move, calling disciples. No doubt she heard how people were already hailing Him as the Messiah. So Mary

sees this as a perfect time, a perfect occasion for Jesus to act, for her son, the Messiah, do something about this crisis.

But notice how Jesus responds to her--in surprising fashion. *Woman, why do you involve me* (literally, *what is this between you and me—what does this concern have to do with me?*) Already in Jesus' reply, we note the separation--the distancing of Jesus from His dear mother.

But this is not cold rebuke as some see it. Jesus was telling His mother that the day had come for her to stop looking to Jesus as her son, and to start looking to Him as her Savior.

Then Jesus said this, *My hour is not yet come*. Jesus repeats that saying throughout his ministry, and that hour always refers to the time of His crucifixion, death, and glorification. So Jesus let's his mother know that there's something much deeper going on here than a shortage of wine.

Mary came to Jesus hoping that he could resolve a practical problem, but Jesus properly sees this as more than a favor, or a polite gesture. Jesus sees this situation in light of His mission and purpose and calling as the Son of God. This was no small thing.

What a moving and convincing scene this is, as we see that Jesus did not use his miraculous powers to his own advantage or to the advantage of his friends and family. He didn't employ his miraculous power in a flippant, selfish, or thoughtless manner. Jesus was not a genie of the lamp who went around making everyone's wishes come true.

Jesus knew that the miracles he performed were for the purpose of revealing Himself as the Son of God who had come to save sinners. So Christ's business, His agenda, so to speak, was not set by His mother on earth, but by His Father in heaven. That is what this response means.

But this didn't mean that Jesus refused to use this occasion as a means of revealing His glory and power. Mary seems to understand that perfectly. She responds to her son, by telling her servants to do whatever He asked.

Now the miracle that Jesus performs here, beloved, is described in rather unspectacular fashion. Not a lot is made of the actual miracle. We're told that there were six stone water jars, the kind of jars which held the water used in Jewish ceremonial cleansing.

The water was there for the guests, to wash their hands or their utensils if at any time during the feast they would have touched something unclean. These jars held between 20 to 30 gallons. There were six of them and Jesus instructed the servants to fill them; they filled them to the brim.

We don't read that the servants *talked back* or that they *laughed* or that they *thought* that this was silly or absurd. But you have to wonder what they were thinking. What was going through their mind at the time? They obviously had plenty of water to go around—they needed more *wine*.

And notice, we're not even told exactly when or how the miracle took place. We don't read that Jesus dramatically waved His hand over jars. Jesus didn't pour any secret potion into the water or utter a magic incantation; there's no *hocus pocus*, or *abracadabra* connected to the miracle.

By the power of His divine will, Jesus simply turned the water into wine. Then to prove the glory and majesty of His power, he tells the servants to draw some out, and take some to the master of the feast.

Think about that. Just seconds ago the servants were pouring water into the jars, filling them to the rim, now Jesus is telling them to draw from that which was water a moment ago, and bring it to the master of the banquet for a taste test—to see if this new wine met with his approval!

It would have been priceless to see the look on their faces! The moment the master of the banquet sips the wine, he calls the bridegroom over privately, not knowing what Jesus had done, and he compliments the bridegroom on this superior wine. He remarks that the usual custom is to serve the best wine first, and then later, once people have drunk their share and have dulled their sense of taste, then they bring out the inexpensive stuff, the wine of cheaper quality.

But this man did just the opposite--he saved the best for last. So, Jesus spared the bridegroom from the potential shame and embarrassment. But Jesus did more than save a man's reputation.

He also revealed something about Himself. For what role did Jesus ultimately take at the feast? Whose job did he perform? Was *he* not playing the part of the bridegroom? He supplied the wine. And notice also how Jesus showed himself to be superior to the old covenant ways, as he surpassed and supplanted the old covenant purification rights; as he turned that old water into the new wine of new covenant which we taste and partake of today.

Christ is revealing himself as Israel's Bridegroom, as the Messiah who ushers in the new and better way. The new covenant era has dawned, and now it is time for Christ's people to put their trust in Jesus and believe that He is the one who makes all things new, who surpasses the old covenant law with a gospel that gives life, that brings joy, that promises joy and freedom.

3) This Sign Produces a Bountiful Blessing

In keeping with our Lord's gracious ways, we see that His provision is more than sufficient for the needs of His people. His sign **Produces a Bountiful Blessing**. The wine was more than enough to provide the needs of the feast and have plenty left over for the newly weds.

But above the physical blessings, our text tells us that as Christ revealed His glory in this way, His disciples put their faith in Him. This sign was not for show, not for the sake of courtesy or kindness, but for the sake of faith--so that Christ would be revealed and received as Lord!

The bread and wine on the table before us remind us of another miraculous provision. It reminds us that Christ willingly gave His body on the cross, and He willingly poured out His precious blood on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins.

Jesus did this not because He was kind, not because he wanted to make friends, not because he felt sorry for us, but because He was the Son of Man who came for this purpose—to give His life as a ransom for many; to give His life, so that we who are dead in our trespasses and sins, who stand condemned by the old covenant, might have faith in Jesus Christ who surpasses the old!

Christ has plans to attend one more wedding feast. One day we will sit with Jesus at the wedding feast of the Lamb, where our bridegroom will take His bride, the church, and together we will celebrate the wedding feast of all eternity. That is what we anticipate in our celebration as well.

Christ the Lamb of God has come. He has come in power and might, revealing Himself for all to see. He has suffered and died and was raised again for the salvation of His Bride. He expects us to put our faith in Him.

To believe on Him as our Lord and Savior, to follow after Him faithfully all the days of our lives. To obey what His Word says, and do so with great joy and thanksgiving in our hearts and lives! See, that is what this passage is all about! It's all about our Lord, who came to provide salvation from our sins, so that we might enjoy everlasting life, and everlasting joy. Amen.