

Water and Wine

It's one thing to see the simple account of Jesus turning water into wine at a wedding in some obscure place a long time ago, and quite another to see His "glory" in that event and so be filled with wonder and believe in Him as one's own Savior and Lord. Verse 11 tells us that the miracle of Jesus turning water into wine was more SIGNificant than a mere marvel or display of power over nature. We who are in church, and perhaps have been for most of our lives, are often in the worst position to appreciate this SIGNificance. We see and believe in the "miracle," but we miss the "sign." We are more like the servants in this situation (vv. 5-7, 9) than Jesus' disciples (v. 11).

John 2:1-12

1 On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. **2** Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples. **3** When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." **4** And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come." **5** His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." **6** Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. **7** Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. **8** And he said to them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast." So they took it. **9** When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom **10** and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now." **11** This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him. **12** After this he went down to Capernaum, with his mother and his brothers and his disciples, and they stayed there for a few days.

In order for us to see Jesus' glory in this event and to believe in Him, we need to see the surprises at each point along the way in John's telling of the story and see how they build on one another. Let's begin with the first of 4 "W's."

I. Wedding (vv. 1-2)

Then and there, as well as here and now, weddings were occasions of great partying and celebration. The song, "To Life" from the play and film, "Fiddler on the Roof" captures the universal gladness humanity celebrates in a wedding. It is surprising to many of us to see the Jesus we grew up with in Sunday School celebrating with his family and friends at a fun wedding!

II. Woman (vv. 3-5)

In Jesus' interaction with His mother in these verses we are surprised by at least three things. First, it appears at first reading that Jesus is rude to His mother by addressing her as "Woman," instead of as "Mother" or "Mom." Second, we are surprised that Jesus seems to have no concern for the groom's potential embarrassment over running out of wine. Third, we are surprised that He says that His hour has not yet come, and then He goes ahead and does what Mary had asked originally. By comparing this passage with 19:26 and 4:21 we learn that "woman" was not a rude form of address in that day. Nevertheless, we understand that Jesus was changing the way His mother would need to start relating to Him. She would need to see Him not as much as her son but more as her Savior, who would not be influenced by any human advice, agenda, or manipulation. He would move forward on His mission from His heavenly father at the divine timetable rather than any human one. Mary was looking at the superficial problem, and Jesus was looking beneath the surface at the significance of weddings and feasting in the Old Testament for the messianic age (Jeremiah 31:12; Hosea 14:7; Amos 9:13-14; cf. Matthew 22:1-14; 25:1-13). He would in fact show grace to this bridegroom in anticipation of His own

wedding feast with His bride at the end of time.

III. Wine (vv. 6-10)

Along with many commentators over the centuries, many of us are surprised that Jesus would perform His first miracle simply to make for a better party or to remove social embarrassment from a family. We fail to appreciate that there are not only bookends around this passage (see the repetition of “Cana in Galilee” in both verses 1 and 11), but also around the whole Bible (see the chiasmic [i.e., “reverse order”] repetition of creation, a wedding, and a serpent from the first 3 chapters of Genesis in a serpent, a wedding, and a new creation in the last 3 chapters of Revelation). We are surprised by the quantity and the quality of the wine, because we fail to see the significance of wine as a good gift from a gracious, generous God to gladden the hearts of humanity (Psalm 104:15; Matthew 26:29; 8:11; Revelation 19:9). We have seen all too clearly the nightmares from the abuse of wine to remember the intended use. As with the wedding, the wine was intended to underscore Jesus’ mission in coming to earth, as stated in John 10:10—“I have come that they might have life and have it abundantly.”

IV. Wonder (vv. 11-12)

Jesus is amazing in His love for us! This sign of His turning water into wine has the same purpose as all of His signs, as John makes clear in the purpose statement for his gospel. “Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his 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” (John 20:30-31). He pursued and redeemed His church, of which we can be a part. “From heaven he came and sought her to be his holy bride; with his own blood he bought her, and for her life he died” (from “The Church’s One Foundation”).

Jesus turned water into wine/
At a wedding/
Through a woman,
So that in holy wonder/
We might say, “I do” to him/
For life (both abundant and eternal).

What does saying “I do” entail?

Become His bride through repentance and faith; love His bride (the church) with our prayers, attendance, tithes, and service; and whatever He tells us to do, do it (see Mary’s “sermon” in 2:5).

Discussion Questions

1. Tell us something “surprising” that happened at your wedding or at another wedding you have attended. (vv. 1-2)
2. How would you describe the tone of Jesus’ interaction with His mother, and how would you explain His taking that tone with her? (vv. 3-5)

3. How would you tell the story of what happened at this wedding if you were: a) the groom, b) a guest, c) a servant, d) the bride, e) a disciple? (vv. 6-10)

4. What elements of this miracle do you see that might suggest that it is not merely the “first” of Jesus’ signs “chronologically” but also the first of Jesus’ signs “primarily” (in the sense of primacy)? (vv. 11-12)

5. What verse of this passage most impresses you today and what will you do about it this week in your life?