

His Glory Manifested - Water to Wine
(John 2:1-11)

And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee: and the mother of Jesus was there: And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage. And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come. His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it. And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece. Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it. When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew:) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now. This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.

This morning we are going to take a look at the first recorded public miracle of Jesus. There is no indication anywhere in the Scriptures that Jesus ever worked any miracle before he came to this wedding feast in Cana. There are extra biblical writings out there that speculate that Jesus amazed his childhood

friends with magic and various wonders. And yet, the Scriptures never say such a thing.

In fact John seems to be careful to point out that this miracle in Cana was the first.

This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee.

John 2:11

I suppose that if the miracles of Jesus had been at his disposal for his own gratification, then I suppose he and his family would not have lived in poverty in Nazareth all those years. But there is no evidence that Jesus ever used miraculous powers for his own benefit. The closest thing to that I suppose is when he sent the disciples to find coins in a fish's mouth. But even that was more for the strengthening of their faith. And of course, he caused the disciples' fishing nets to be full of fish. But again, Jesus got no advantage out of that, but he manifested his glory to the disciples to strengthen their faith.

Up until this marriage feast in Cana, Jesus had remained virtually unknown. He was just the son of Joseph and Mary. He was a carpenter's son. He lived in the lowly side of Israel in Nazareth. His only public appearance was at the age of 12 when he amazed the teachers in Jerusalem with his knowledge of the Scriptures. Other than that, there is no record of any public exploits.

His glory remained under cover. When you looked at Jesus, you simply saw a human being. There was nothing about his appearance that was to be desired. You didn't look at Jesus and say, "Why,

surely that is the Son of God!” When you touched him there was no shock wave that went through your body to alert you that this was God.

I am sure that even Mary had a difficult time seeing through the humanity of her son. His glory was hidden under the wrap of human flesh. And his brothers and sisters only saw his humanity. And all of the town of Nazareth only saw the humanity of Jesus.

But now, it was time for the deity of Jesus to be revealed. This would not be a secret any longer. Now it was time to take the wraps off. Now it was time to show God to Israel.

This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested his glory.

John 2:11

Jesus began his public ministry in Bethany where he was baptized by John the Baptist. And when he was baptized there was a very impressive sign that was given to John the Baptist and I suppose to others that were standing by. The heavens opened up and the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, descended on Jesus and rested on him. And this was principally a sign to confirm to John the Baptist that this man Jesus was the one. And there was a voice from heaven which said, “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” And from this point forward, the deity of Jesus began to be on display.

Jesus went off into the wilderness for 40 days and 40 nights where he was sorely tempted, but then he returned to Bethany where John was baptizing and Jesus began to call his disciples.

Andrew and another disciple (probably John) were the first. They were at first John's disciples. But then John pointed at Jesus and told them, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." And the two disciples followed Jesus.

When Andrew was convinced that Jesus was the Messiah, he went and found his brother Simon and brought Simon to Jesus. And Jesus changed his name to Peter.

Then, Jesus went into Galilee and found Philip. And Philip followed Jesus. And Philip found Nathanael and Nathanael came. And Jesus told Nathanael, I saw thee "when thou wast under the fig tree." And Nathanael was astonished and he believed in Jesus.

But Jesus told Nathanael,

Thou shalt see greater things than these.

John 1:50

And that brings us to our text for this morning where Jesus will show Nathanael something greater.

Most of you know the story. Three days after Nathanael came to Jesus there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee. It seems that this may have been a marriage involving one of Jesus' relatives. Now you will notice that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was there. In fact, Mary seems to have had some responsibilities at the marriage because when the wine ran out she took it as her duty to find some. If Mary had simply been a guest at the wedding, you wouldn't suppose

that she would have been the one seeking a solution to the problem.

You need to understand that in that culture, the marriage festivities extended over several days. It was quite an effort to come from out-of-town in that day and time. And when they made the journey, they intended to stay a while. And it seems that in that culture, it was the bridegroom's responsibility to provide the food and the wine. And it was a matter of great importance. It was considered a great offense to the guests if there were not adequate provisions. It was a great embarrassment if guests travelled for days and then the food and drink was insufficient.

Perhaps the groom at this wedding was Mary's relative because when the wine ran out, Mary was sent to find some. And she came to Jesus.

Now Jesus had come to the wedding and he had come with his disciples. This is most important because the divine purpose of this occasion seems to be the strengthening of the disciples in faith.

This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.

John 2:11

You remember that the disciples at this time have only known Jesus for one week. Philip and Nathanael have known Him for three days. And it is here in Cana that Jesus will begin instructing them in his divinity. It is here that they will begin to behold his glory. It is here that they will begin to be established and confirmed in the faith.

Over the next three years these men would witness things that would prove over and over again that this man Jesus was God himself. In short, they would witness his glory. They would witness lame men healed. Blind men would see. Deaf people would hear. They would even see dead people raised to life. They would see thousands of people fed with five loaves and two fishes. They would see Jesus walk on water and calm the storm. They would see demons cast out. They would see Jesus heal from a distance. Some of them would see Jesus transfigured before their very eyes. They would find coins in a fish's mouth. They would see Jesus utter a curse upon a fig tree and then watch it wither in front of their eyes. They would see Jesus heal a soldier's ear after Peter cut it off with his sword. They saw all manner of miracles by this man Jesus during their time with Him. But here is Cana they saw his first miracle. I doubt that they ever got over this stunning day.

Now it is interesting that Matthew, Mark and Luke were not present here in Cana. They were not disciples of Jesus at this time. So, they did not witness this first miracle. And this miracle is not recorded in Matthew, Mark and Luke. But it is recorded in the Gospel of John. And so I suspect that John was present on this occasion. This would suggest that John was the unnamed disciple who followed Jesus with Andrew.

Now first let's take a look at,

Mary's Motherly Direction to Jesus

When they were out of wine, Mary, the mother of Jesus, came to him.

And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine.

John 2:3

Although the text does not say that Mary made any request, it is implied that she wants Jesus to do something about the lack of wine. She says, "They have no wine."

Of course, Mary knew that Jesus was the product of a miraculous birth. She remembered that the angel had spoken to her about her son.

Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."

Luke 1:30-35

But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.

Luke 2:19

Mary must have had a very difficult time balancing the fact that she was the mother of Jesus and yet, He was her God. She had given birth to Jesus. She had fed him and raised him when he was

a helpless baby. She gave him parental guidance when he was a child. When Jesus was a child, Mary had a certain authority over him. Jesus was required by good manners and by the Mosaic Law to obey his parents and to respect them and to honor them.

But now that Jesus is an adult and now that he has begun his public ministry, there is a very painful lesson for Mary to learn. And that lesson is that the former parent-child relationship, that structure of authority and submission that exists between mother and child, must give way to the spiritual reality of things. And Mary must come to understand that her son's duty is first and foremost to the heavenly Father and to His will and not to Mary and her will.

I suspect this was a very difficult thing for Mary to grasp. She was accustomed to telling her son what to do. "Jesus, go help your father in the carpenter shop. Jesus, run down to the market and get some flour. Jesus, go wash your hands and come to supper." She was like any other mother; she told her son what to do during his childhood.

But now Jesus is nearly thirty years old and he must be about his Father's business. And he has just opened his public ministry in Bethany. He was baptized by John, the sky opened up and the Holy Spirit descended on him. He has successfully passed his test in the wilderness and He has called five disciples. And his public ministry has just begun.

But Mary is still in mother mode. All she knows is that the bridegroom has run out of wine. And she comes to Jesus and says, "They are out of wine." And the implication is, "Do something."

Was she asking Jesus to perform a miracle? We don't know. Our text says that this is his first miracle, so there is no precedent which would suggest to Mary that Jesus might snap his fingers and create wine. And yet, she must have known that he was capable. Maybe she knew that he was now going public and she thought this would be a good time to demonstrate his deity.

More likely to me is that Mary had come to depend on Jesus for many things. There is no mention of Joseph in this account and it is widely thought that Joseph has died and therefore Jesus is the man of the house. Jesus is the oldest son and when there was a need, I suppose that Mary routinely came to Jesus for help. So she tells Jesus they are out of wine.

The Response of Jesus to Mary

Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come.

John 2:4

You will notice that Jesus calls his mother, "Woman." This is probably not the best way to translate this because in our language it sounds disrespectful, doesn't it? If you call your mother, "Woman," she might go get the belt even if you are thirty years old.

But this word "woman" doesn't really convey the correct tone of the Greek word. The closest word I can think of to convey this address to Mary is the word "Ma'am."

Example: When my mother told me to do something and I said, “Yes Ma’am,” it was not disrespectful.

Example: If you were walking down the street and a lady dropped her wallet, you might call out to her, “Ma’am you dropped your wallet.”

And you can see that the term Ma’am is not disrespectful. And the word translated “Woman” in our text is not a disrespectful term in itself. But the thing which strikes us is that Jesus did not call her “Mother.” I am sure as a child he did not call her Woman or Ma’am. He must have called her “Mom” or “Mother.” But now, he calls her woman. And with this address, he begins to distance himself from his earthly relationships.

And the idea is that Jesus is moving into a phase of his life where he will not be commanded by his mother any longer, rather, she will be commanded by Him. There must be a transition now where He will be her God and she will be His servant. This is the natural progression of things. This day was sure to come and now it is here. And Jesus says,

What have I to do with thee?

This is an expression that is found elsewhere in the Bible. It has the effect of distancing two parties. Literally translated, the phrase doesn’t make too much sense. It would be literally translated, “What to me and to you?” But the phrase was used to suggest that the parties had different purposes.

Take a look at Matthew 8:28, 29 where the same phrase is used.

And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way, And behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God?

Matthew 8:28, 29

This is the same phrase, and it clearly denotes counter-purposes. The demons said to Jesus, "What have we to do with thee?" And the implication is, "We have nothing to do with you. Leave us alone."

And so when Jesus used this phrase with his mother, he was suggesting that there was now the need to distance himself from human relationships and even from his mother. The mother-son relationship had become less important than the Father-Son relationship.

This is a concept that Mary had to learn the hard way throughout Jesus' ministry.

While he yet talked to the people, behold, his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him. Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee. But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? And who are my brethren? For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.

Matthew 11:46-50

So, in our text, where Jesus calls his mother Woman, or Ma'am, Jesus is mildly rebuking Mary for imposing on her maternal relationship to Jesus. And then, He says,

Mine hour is not yet come.

Some have suggested that by this Jesus means that the time for working miracles has not yet come. I suppose this is a possibility. However, Jesus did work a miracle on this occasion and so I would have to assume that his time for working miracles had come. There was a time and a place for his first miracle and this was it!

But let me suggest to you that whenever Jesus used this phrase, "Mine hour is not yet come," he always referred to his death.

These words spake Jesus in the treasury, as He taught in the temple: and no man laid hands on Him; for His hour was not yet come.

John 8:20

And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.

John 12:23

Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour.

John 13:1

These words spake Jesus, and lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come;

glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee.
John 17:1

And so, it seems best to interpret it that way here. His hour of suffering, the hour of his death and the hour of his glorification had not come. And if it had not come, then Mary should not be asking him to manifest himself at her time, on her terms and for her benefit.

You see, when Jesus began to perform miracles, it was the beginning of the end for him. As long as he was unknown to the world, then his hour was not yet come. But as soon as he stepped forward on the public stage, then all roads led to Calvary.

If I may paraphrase, I believe Jesus was saying that he did not operate on Mary's timetable anymore. He now operated on his Father's timetable only. And because his time was not yet come, Jesus did not make an open display of himself at this marriage feast. Even though he did perform his first public miracle, it was done very privately and without fanfare and I take it that it was done privately because his hour was not yet come.

*His mother saith unto the servants,
Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.*
John 2:5

It is amazing how people in the Scriptures unwittingly state certain truisms. You might remember how Caiaphas said,

Now consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation.

John 11:50, 51

What Herod meant was that if they left Jesus alone, He was causing such an uprising among the people that the Romans would come and destroy the whole nation. And so, Herod proposed to kill Jesus so that the nation would be spared from the Romans. But in so stating, he was actually prophesying that Jesus should die in a spiritual way for the nation.

And in our text Mary says, "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it."

This is good advice for anyone, isn't it? She spoke to the servants, but the advice is good for all.

And there were six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece.

Now there were six waterpots; not for drinking but for washing. You see that they were there "after the manner of the purifying of the Jews."

The Jews had all manner of laws and traditions. And they were required to wash themselves continually.

Example: Now when we call the children to the dinner table, we tell them to go wash your hands and come to dinner.

Example: The Jews were required to wash continually during dinner.

For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables.

Mark 7:3, 4

You see, sin was so evident and exposed under the Law that continual washing was required to make them clean. Now of course, washing in water only made them ceremonially clean. It is the blood of Jesus that washes us clean, but before the death of Christ it was necessary to picture the washing away of sins by washing in water.

And they had waterpots for this purpose. And it says here that there were six waterpots. And they were stone waterpots.

Now stone waterpots were very heavy and unwieldy. And you might wonder why they didn't use clay waterpots. They would have been much lighter and easier to carry. But according to their tradition, clay was a permeable material. And when they drew water from the pots to wash, the pots would become unclean and the uncleanness would permeate through the clay. And because the pots absorbed the uncleanness, the pots themselves became unclean. So, they used stone water pots. It was thought that stone would not absorb the uncleanness.

These six stone waterpots contained two or three firkins apiece. Now it appears that a firkin of water was about nine gallons. So each waterpot, if it contained only two firkins, would hold about 18 gallons of water. With six waterpots, this would be a minimum of 108 gallons of water. If each pot held three firkins, then there would be 162 gallons of water.

Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim.

Now it is important here that the servants filled the waterpots to the brim lest anyone would say that wine was mixed with the water. When Jesus performed a miracle it was a miracle indeed. There was no trick. There was nothing hidden. There was no curtain that obscured the view. And so, they filled the pots to the brim.

And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it. When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom. And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now.

John 2:8-10

From the above we learn that:

1. Jesus never touched the water or the waterpots.

2. There were only two groups that witnessed the miracle – the servants (v.8) and the disciples (v.11)
3. The wine that was made from water was of outstanding quality.

The governor of the feast immediately recognized the quality of the wine. It was better than the wine that they had at the beginning of the feast. Now this is contrary to common practice. The good wine is normally brought first when taste buds are fresh and sensitive and then later, when the senses are somewhat dulled, the cheaper wine is uncorked and no one knows the difference.

But wouldn't you just know that the wine that Jesus made was better than that first wine? This wine was made by God himself. I suppose that there was no wine on the face of the earth that was better. This wine must have been perfectly proportioned and well suited for the occasion.

4. The wine was more than mere grape juice.

There are commentators who will argue for pages and pages that Jesus would never provide an intoxicating drink for the guests, as if it would be his fault if someone would over-indulge.

But it seems to me that the very argument of the governor proves that the wine was a fermented drink. He said, "Most people put out the best wine first and then when men have well drunk, they put out that which is worse." I think the point is that when men have drunk well, their taste buds are dulled to the

taste, their senses are dulled and they cannot discern the worse wine that is served later.

And so, I take it that Jesus turned water into wine and not grape juice. I doubt seriously that Jesus turned the water into a wine with a dangerously high alcoholic content. Now manufacturers today produce liquor for the sole purpose of intoxication. But the wine that they had in those days was for the purpose of quenching thirst and for the delight to the taste. Wine was consumed as an everyday drink. And I am confident that Jesus turned water into a very lovely wine.

The Purpose of This First Miracle

1. The primary purpose of this first miracle of Jesus was to strengthen the faith of his disciples.

This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.

Jesus manifested forth his glory. What does that mean? It means that he showed forth his divinity. Now the only people that observed the miracle were the servants and the disciples. And it doesn't tell us what effect the miracle had on the servants. But it does tell us that it had a wonderful effect on the disciples. It says they believed on him.

And so I take it that this was the primary purpose of Jesus in performing this miracle.

Remember that the Gospel of John was written to prove that Jesus is the Son of God. And this first miracle is designed to prove that he is the Son of God. But the proof is directed to five disciples: Andrew, John(?), Simon, Philip and Nathanael. And I am sure that these five disciples left this marriage feast thinking one thing – this man is the Messiah.

2. A secondary purpose of the miracle is to show that Law gives way to grace; that Moses gives way to Jesus.

It seems to me that there is theological significance to this first miracle. Remember, the water from the Jewish water pots of purification was turned into wine. It seems to me that perhaps this is a picture of the Old Covenant being transformed to the New Covenant. It is the end of the Law and the beginning of grace. And so, Jesus takes the water of Jewish purification and transforms it into the wine of grace.

In the Scriptures wine is often a symbol of joy and happiness.

God brings forth . . . *wine that maketh glad the heart of man . . .*

Psalm 104:14, 15

Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works.

Ecclesiastes 9:7

I take it here that this miracle in some way contrasts the Mosaic Law with the new Messianic age of Christ.

For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

John 1:17

And Jesus turned the Jewish water into the marvelous wine of the new age. The Old Covenant was a time of fasting in many ways. But when Jesus came, bringing in the grace of the New Covenant, it was a time of feasting and celebration.

And so, perhaps it is fitting that Jesus' first miracle signifies a movement from water to wine, a movement from that old legal age to the new age of grace.

Other Matters of Instruction From This Passage

1. By his presence and his gracious provision, Jesus sanctioned the institution of marriage.

Certainly, Jesus willingly participated at the marriage. He even catered it! And this must be seen as an endorsement of the institution. After all, he created the first husband and the first wife. And he created this husband and this wife. And by his attendance he gave his blessing to the institution of marriage.

2. All men receive the grace of Christ on different levels.

All men at the wedding benefited by the provision of Christ. However, they benefited on different levels. Some merely drank the wine and

tasted of the goodness of Christ. They never even knew it was the product of a miracle.

The servants had a deeper insight. To them it was given to witness the miracle of Christ and they saw his grace on a deeper level. But even they may have been bewildered by it all.

But the disciples drank deeply of the grace of Christ and they believed on him. This shows the various degrees to which the grace of Christ is received among men.

Let me close by saying that it is very important to lay your eyes on the miracle of grace which Christ lays out to mankind. His grace flows like a mighty river for all to see. But only a few ever soak in its true significance.

Let me encourage you to lay your eyes on this man Christ Jesus and see the One from whom all blessings flow. When you taste his good wine from day to day, know that He is God and like the disciples, believe on him.