

## **The Gospel of John - #10 - 12/06/2020 - "The First of His Signs!" John 2: 1-11**

**Introduction: IL** DEARLY beloved, we are gathered together here in the sight of God, and in the face of this company, to join together this Man and this Woman in holy Matrimony; which is an honourable estate, instituted of God, signifying unto us the mystical union that is between Christ and his Church: which holy estate Christ adorned and beautified with his presence and first miracle that he wrought in Cana of Galilee, and is commended of Saint Paul to be honourable among all men: and therefore is not by any to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly; but reverently, discreetly, soberly, and in the fear of God. [Book of Common Prayer]

No doubt many of you have been to a wedding and heard those important words! Today we are invited to look on at a wedding at the very beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry. This took place on "the third day" after Jesus drew men to Himself as disciples. This "third day" miracle is a picture of another "third day" miracle- Jesus coming alive from the tomb at the end of His public ministry. Both miracles, and all those in between, have a significant place in the Gospel records such as the Apostle John gives us today! Let's join in as this joyous occasion gets underway (and may we find **joy** in the process)!

**The Wedding Invitation- verses 1, 2** The location of this wedding is Cana of Galilee, about 8 miles north of Nazareth on the west side of the Sea of Galilee. **IL-** Josephus, the Jewish historian, had living quarters there in his day. It will help us to know a little about Jewish wedding procedure back in that time period. Most couples were engaged for anywhere from three months to a year, and they were considered legally married but without the physical part of marriage. If the man or woman wanted to end the "betrothal" they had to serve divorce papers to make that legal. Joseph, betrothed to Mary, found out about Mary's pregnancy, and he considered divorce. We read about that in Matthew 1: 18-19- Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. Notice that he was called her "husband" even while they were engaged. Weddings in that culture usually involved a week-long celebration. The groom was the center of attention with the actual ceremony occurring on a Wednesday. The bride's family was responsible to set up the ceremony and the groom's family was in charge of all the celebrations and the food and drink for each occasion that week. The night of the ceremony the groom's clan would travel to the bride's home and bring her and her family to the groom's house for the big event. Their vows were made in public, just as they have been in weddings ever since- vows before others of faithfulness to each other! A couple of important connections come to mind here at the start of this message. First- Jesus was invited to attend, along with His mother and His disciples, and possibly His brothers and sisters. Jesus accepted the invitation- He was not and is not a loner- He loves people and He loved being around people then! I believe Jesus was always welcomed among those who enjoyed life. He went to parties, enjoyed good laughter and good conversations and no doubt good food and drink! I think of the call of Matthew to follow Jesus. Jesus was at Matthew's home, enjoying his company, along with other tax collectors and

companions as we read in Matthew 9: 9-10- As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him. And as Jesus reclined at table *in the house*, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. Joseph and Mary may have been friends with the couple, either the groom or bride, but Joseph is not mentioned in this text because he probably had died by this time. We think that Mary may have been like a hostess since she was aware that the wine had run out at that point in time. Lesson: it is legitimate to be socially active, not a hermit or a cloistered nun or a monastic priest! Jesus loved to spend time with regular people and not with the religious crowd who thought so highly of themselves! Second- marriage is God's plan from the beginning and it is honorable. Hebrews 13: 4 reads- "Let marriage be held in honor and let the marriage bed be undefiled for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous." **IL-** Too many people in our culture either live together or have the view that if it doesn't work out you get a divorce and move on. They often forget that those wedding vows are just that, promises meant to be kept. That piece of paper that you fill out and sign is a legal document. Many have expressed the false view that "it's just a piece of paper" but it really is much more than that! Jesus here proves the sanctity of marriage and the public vow of faithfulness! **IL-** Warren Wiersbe- "Wise is the couple who invites Jesus to their wedding!"

**The 'Woman' Who is Jesus' Mother- verses 3-5** We come now to the verses that highlight Jesus and his earthly mother, Mary. John never mentions Mary by name but as "the mother of Jesus" (just as he never mentions his name as a disciple of Jesus!) We need to realize that Mary knew well who Jesus was and is. Her words about Him in Luke chapters 1 and 2 make that very clear. Besides those two passages in Luke, this is the only time in the Gospels that Mary speaks. She appears here and at the foot of the Cross, when Jesus was crucified, in John 19: 25 and following. From Luke 1 and 2 and this text we discover that her words always glorify Jesus. She is not making demands or pushing her weight around as His mother, claiming any special privileges. Her words are a simple statement of fact- "they have no wine!" She merely mentions the need. She may have anticipated that Jesus would do something to help this couple. The groom's family was responsible for all the food and beverage, and could even have been sued for failing to provide adequate sustenance for the guests who travelled to the wedding. She most likely didn't want the couple to look bad, but I am sure she also wanted Jesus to be affirmed at the start of His public ministry. She may have also wanted Him to offer a demonstration of His power and glory as Messiah, not for her benefit but for His. My point is that she knew of her son's ministry- not every detail of it, but enough to know that He deserved acknowledgment as the Messiah and Lord. His response is important- "Woman- what does this have to do with you and Me?" The word 'woman' here is more like the term "lady" and is certainly not disrespectful to her, nor does she take it that way! Rather, He is implying that there is a new relationship with His mother now that He is underway with His public presentation and outreach as He connects with still more disciples in the future. He wanted to make it clear that she could not seek His help on the basis of being His mother now. She saw a glimpse of that even when Jesus was twelve and stayed behind in Jerusalem while Joseph and Mary began the

trek home. Luke 2: 49-50- And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" And they did not understand the saying that he spoke to them. Jesus knew that He had a calling from the Father and that His life and ministry were on a heavenly timetable! Jesus here refers to "My hour" and that speaks, not only of the Cross, but also of His presentation over time as the Messiah and the Savior of lost men and women who will come by faith and receive Him. Notice most importantly that Jesus does not tell the "woman" 'No' or 'Yes'. He just does what only He can do- the miraculous, in His own time and His own way! Next we read of Mary's last recorded words in the Bible- "Whatever He tells you- do it!" What a remarkable motto that would be for my life and yours- "whatever He says to do- do it!" Let's look now at what He does tell the servants...

**Water, Wine and Willing Servants- verses 6-10** Clean water was a consistent problem in their culture in that part of the world. Many people kept water jars out on their patio or deck so that visitors could wash their hands before entering the house. These stone jars were large- holding 20 to 30 gallons of water each. The King James Bible uses the phrase 'two or three firkins' which is a measurement of 8 to 9 gallons each of liquid or about 20 gallons. Jewish laws about hand washing were quite clear as you can detect from reading Mark 7: 3 and 4- For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands properly, holding to the tradition of the elders, and when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other traditions that they observe, such as the washing of cups and pots and copper vessels and dining couches.) I hope you caught the words, "all the Jews..." So, they have run out of wine and Jesus focuses on those six large pots of water. We will consider the "sign" or miracle that occurs in this part of the text in a moment, but first a few thoughts on alcohol consumption. We need to be clear that the wine of Jesus' day was fermented juice. They average person would mix their wine with water- about one-third part water. This would make the water palatable but also provide a good beverage to accompany a meal. Drunkenness was sternly condemned by the rabbis. The Bible also condemns drunkenness. Listen to Ephesians 5: 18, in the larger context of the work of the Holy Spirit- "Do not get drunk with wine wherein is excess, but be filled with (controlled by) the Holy Spirit." Those who cannot control their wine are described so vividly in Proverbs 23: 31-35- Do not look at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup and goes down smoothly. In the end it bites like a serpent and stings like an adder. Your eyes will see strange things, and your heart utter perverse things. You will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea, like one who lies on the top of a mast "They struck me," you will say, "but I was not hurt; they beat me, but I did not feel it. When shall I awake? I must have another drink." Grape juice in that part of the world back then took usually 4 months to a year to age and provide a delicious beverage for mealtime. Without refrigeration great care would be taken to age the wine properly and it was, for the common man, very expensive. But we need to be clear that wine in the Bible is not just grape juice. Such an interpretation would not make sense with Paul's admonition to Timothy in 1 Timothy 5: 23- "Take a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent illnesses." Two things do come to mind for me- one is that we need to be very careful about our "convictions" so that we do not

harm another brother or sister who has different standards. Rather, our conduct and our conversation on such subjects should demonstrate love and respect. Secondly, as I referred earlier to Ephesians 5: 18, what makes the best sense is to occupy ourselves with letting the Holy Spirit control us, not some substance or practice that only brings temporary happiness. The joy of the Lord is our strength! Now, a quick look at these servants who listened to the command of Jesus that day. They took the command seriously and filled those large pots "to the brim"! These servants were not slaves. The word used in this text is the Greek word for a deacon, one who renders helpful service or one who "gets it done!" Jesus could have worked this powerful sign without them, but He chose to use them and they complied- obeyed. **IL-** F. B. Meyer- "Prayer- Lord, enable me to do not only what I like to do, but what I ought to do!" These pots held between 120 and 180 gallons total of water. Jesus turned that water into delicious wine without touching the jars or the water and even without saying a word. He WILLED it into being by His power. The means were human- adding water to the brim of each pot, but the result was Divine! By filling those pots to the brim it meant nothing could be added, like additional wine that would mix with the water. The miracle was instantaneous. The servants were given three simple commands- fill, draw, take. They obeyed completely and took some to the master of ceremonies for his reaction. Some expositors believe that this man intended to be a bit dramatic when he told the groom, who was responsible for providing food and drink- "This is the good stuff!" Most families in that situation would have quality wine in a small amount at the start of the meal and then, when everyone had a glass or two, they would serve the cheaper stuff. But the MC noticed just the opposite! Jesus gave the wedding party and guests "good stuff"- not junk! And God is in the business of providing us with an abundance to meet our needs as we pray for His provision as Jehovah Jireh- the God who provides!" Now that we have looked at the miracle itself, I want to share some practical application for you and me today about **joy** especially...

**The Joy-filled Walk of a Disciple- verse 11** The five disciples who were invited along with Jesus believed in Him even more than before because of this "Sign"- a sign was a pointed miracle from the Lord that focused greater attention on Jesus than was ever possible without the miraculous intervention of God's power! Look at those who apparently DIDN'T believe- the servants, the master of ceremonies who tasted the new wine, the groom and bride, the other guests- as far as the record shows only His disciples believed in a deeper way than before this miraculous intervention! A disciple, by definition, is a learner who learns by instruction from another who teaches. You and I have much to learn from God's Word! Let's be careful not to miss the opportunity! **IL-** William Barclay- "The shut mind is the end of discipleship!" May we keep an open and inquisitive mind- in doing so we will find great JOY from the truths of God's Word! Secondly- may we consider it a tremendous privilege to serve our Master! May we not miss the blessing due to disobedience! Remember the motto- "Whatever He says to you- do it!" That's where the joy comes from! Those who are faithful in the little things are then trusted by our Master with greater responsibility and greater reward! And like those five followers of Jesus, may we go on believing and growing in our faith. Jesus' first miracle brought a solution to a

problem, not an answer to a tragedy. But Jesus cares about both in your life and mine. Never forget that though some of our requests in prayer may seem small, He cares and will respond, just like He will if the issue is of a tragic nature and brings us temporary sorrow. Joy comes in the morning! And may we not be content with "Well, twenty years ago I served the Lord!" And, may we all give Him all we've got, like those deacons who filled the pots to the brim. May we believe Him to the brim, love Him to the brim, serve Him to the brim and find, as we will, joy to the brim! Jesus, I believe, is saying to us- "Invite Me into your relationships and family and church family!" We couldn't possibly miss the joy then! Jesus is NOT a joy-killer but a joy-giver, and in abundance! **IL-** "Thou art coming to a King, Large petitions with thee bring; For His grace and power are such, None can ever ask too much!"

**Conclusion:** The joy of the Lord is better than any food or drink we could consume or any merely human experience we could participate in. Psalm 4: 7 says- "You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound!" **IL-** John Stott (Christianity Today [June 12, 1981], p. 19) wrote about a Salvation Army drummer in England who was beating his drum so hard that the band leader had to tell him to tone it down and not make so much noise. The Irish drummer replied, "God bless you, sir, but since I've been converted, I'm so very happy, I could bust the bloomin' drum!" That's the kind of joy that Jesus wants us to have!

**Closing Song-** "Sing for Joy!"