

That You May Have Life In His Name - John 2:1-11

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The Wedding at Cana

2 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.

(Jn 2:1–11)

There is so much more to the story...

- Location** - This wedding was likely a half-day walk from where Jesus has been living for the past 18 years in Nazareth. Some sources say that you can see Cana from Nazareth. Jesus was known as the son of a carpenter as Joseph and Mary raised Jesus, but the last mention of Joseph was when Jesus was twelve years old at the temple. Most likely, Joseph has passed away, and Jesus has remained with his mother Mary to care for and provide for his younger siblings. This is the context of the wedding – a place close to Jesus, where likely Mary would have had a role to play or connection with the host family for this wedding feast. John describes this scene from a first hand account. A Jewish wedding in Palestine was a significant social occasion intended to bring joy and honor to all those participating.
- Wedding** - A marriage celebration was a major social event in this culture, with festivities often lasting a week, with great feasting and celebration. Gracious, generous hospitality was the expectation for food and drink, and anything less would be shameful. Think of joy and laughter. Think of smiles and fun dancing. Envision great food and celebratory wine. This is a festive, fun, joyous occasion. Don't think gluttony or drunkenness. That would have been shameful. Think friends and family rejoicing for days with food and wine, with laughter and conversation, with music and dancing, with a village celebrating and honoring a couple for their wedding. The actual wedding ceremony would occur later in the evening after an elaborate meal, and then the couple would be led the long way home through the village streets under a canopy with torches lighting the way and for the next week, their home was open and they remained dressed in their bridal attire, treated like royalty.

This sign that John writes of is one many in a sequence he will write, with new wine made from water, a new temple for worship, a new birth through belief in Jesus, a new well for water that quenches thirst, and new worship in spirit and truth. These stories point back to the fullness we see in Jesus as He gives grace upon grace.

The scene is set...

This wedding in Cana (archaeology began at this site in 1998)

Mother of Jesus is there as friend or relative as part of hospitality

Jesus is most likely there with John who is writing this, along with Andrew, Simon Peter, Philip, and Nathanael.

For a Jewish wedding – wine was considered essential. Rabbis would say without wine there is no joy. Wine was meant to be savored, in community, in celebration, in joy. Gracious hospitality was the expectation. Abundance of great food and drink was the protocol. To have less or to run out would bring great shame and dishonor on the groom and his host family.

Here we see Mary – the mother of Jesus – very much concerned that the wine has run out. She approaches Jesus and his response is a term of dear affection and respect – We read “woman” but that falls short and doesn’t translate well in English. In kindness he refers to her with respect, and in the original language literally says, “What to me and to you?”

DA Carson writes and we can see, *“Jesus has embarked on this ministry, the purpose of his coming; his only lodestar is his heavenly Father’s will; this must have been extremely difficult for Mary. She had borne him, nursed him, taught his baby fingers elementary skills, watched him fall over as he learned to walk; apparently she had also come to rely on him as the family provider. But now that he had entered into the purpose of his coming, everything, even family ties, had to be subordinated to his divine mission. She could no longer view him as other mothers viewed their sons; she must no longer be allowed the prerogatives of motherhood. It is a remarkable fact, that everywhere Mary appears during the course of Jesus’ ministry, Jesus is at pains to establish distance between them. This is not callousness on Jesus’ part – on the cross he makes provision for her future, but she, like every other person, must come to him as to the promised Messiah, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”*

This is why Jesus says, my hour has not yet come. Even in this moment – Jesus was living with the cross in mind, day by day, taking step after step towards what He knew was necessary, faithfully moving towards the hour of His offering as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

We see Mary’s concern – and we see Jesus’ response – but then we also see Mary’s confidence in Jesus when she says to the servants “Do whatever he tells you.”

John then explains that 6 stone jars were there for purification reasons – this water was present not only to wash the dirty dusty feet of the guests, but the water was also there for cleaning hands. Jewish ceremonial law required that this was done before the meal and between each course of the meal. So much water would be available...

Jesus instructs the servants – to fill these stone jars with water and the servants fill them to the very top. 180 gallons of water is now before Jesus, Andrew, Simon Peter, Philip, and Nathanael and whoever else was watching. In this moment – the same God who speaks the universe into existence now turns water to wine. Good wine. With all the complexity and structure, with all the notes of fruit and flavor. This wine is above standard, its quality exceeding the expectations of master of the feast. This wine was exceptional and noteworthy.

Jon Bloom writes, “Out of Jesus’ fullness, the wedding guests received grace upon grace. They drank the very best earthly wine ever created, made by the Creator of grapes Himself. But more than that, the wine they drank freely was a foretaste of the gospel.”

This is the first sign and this is the first place – in an ordinary village home, among ordinary people that Jesus would have known, and among people where his mother had friendships, that Jesus chooses to reveal his glory and the disciples believed him.

Barclay says it well – that Jesus turning water to wine, “was to save a humble Galilean family from hurt (social shame) that Jesus put forth his power. It was in sympathy, in kindness, in understanding for simple people that Jesus acted. Nearly everyone can do the big thing on the big occasion; but it takes Jesus to do the big thing on a simple occasion like this... Jesus, the Lord of all life and the King of Glory used his power to save a simple Galilean bride and groom from humiliation.”

John the Baptist is in the middle of a conversation about ritual purification, when he says, “The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete. He must increase, but I must decrease.” John 3:29-30

If in Jewish culture we see the groom bear the responsibility of supply for the needs of the bride, and making sure the wedding celebration provides the food and drink for all its guests...

The first miracle Jesus does is helping a groom and his family provide what they could not provide for themselves. How much more has Jesus done this for us...

This story really isn't about wine, or even this wedding feast. It's about what Jesus can do and it helps us see what He is like.

Ordinary stone jars used for cleansing... are now repurposed and pointing towards something far greater and more beautiful, this abundant supply of water turned to wine will point to the abundance of his grace in His shed blood on the Cross.

These disciples see the glory of Jesus. They see the power of Jesus. They see Jesus in such a way, that while other people will soon follow Jesus and form a crowd, it was in this little moment in a small village, in the home of a wedding feast, that something beautiful and marked by mercy, that Jesus turns water into really good wine.

Here's the thing about wine – in the world today, there are 10,000 varieties of wine grapes today. Grapes are grown in many places around the world, like in Italy, France, Spain, Australia, Argentina, Israel, and Romania. The same grape grown in one place will taste very different grown in another place – because of factors like climate, altitude, weather, sunlight, water, warmth and soil composition. All these factors determine the outcome of flavor.

Seeing this... and everything else that Jesus will do and say – it binds these men to Jesus. They see. They believe. And ultimately seeing Him give His life for them – will lead to them to leverage their lives for Him. But each of their lives looked different, they too, affected by family, by personality, by failures, by experiences – yet all of them, devoted to Jesus. The same hope of the gospel – poured out in unique expressions of God's grace at work in their lives. The same is true for us. The body of Christ is a beautiful expression of God's redeemed creation.

The Apostle Paul – who once hated Jesus - now transformed by Jesus - says this, “⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

¹² Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

¹⁴ Do all things without grumbling or disputing, ¹⁵ that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, ¹⁶ holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. ¹⁷ Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. ¹⁸ Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.

(Php 2:4–18)

What does it look like to have life in the name of Jesus? Let me put that another way – what does it look like when people know they have life in the name of Jesus? What do you look like, when you have life in the name of Jesus? It looks like being poured out as an offering unto Him.