

Telegraphing the Message

9/10/23

John 2:1-11

Sunday AM

I'm excited! Pumped! B/c I can hardly wait to see what God is going to do in/thru our lives over the next 12 weeks as we walk together in the footsteps of Jesus.

For me, this journey began when I was awakened one evening in the middle of the night to the urging of the H.S. As I got out of bed and began to pray, I sensed a question in my soul that left me befuddled. I silently heard w/in my spirit, "When have you ever followed me?" My initial response was, "Lord, I've been trying to follow you since I was 12." Yet again I heard, "But when have you ever followed Me? When have you strapped on your sandals, became the 13th disciple and walked w/ Me from start to finish as I disciplined the (12)?" And my reply, "Lord, I've never done that!" So, the next AM, I went to my office, laid out the (4) Gospels, and preceded to parallel chronologically the life, ministry, and teachings of Jesus. Then, over the next few months, I made this my daily QT – and God began a new work in me that has changed everything about my relationship w/ Him.

So, I'm pumped! B/c together, over the next 12 weeks, I can hardly wait to see how God is going to move in and thru all of us as we allow Jesus to be our Rabbi. Here's how it's going to work. You do the daily Bible reading, then I'll teach on one of the days, your LIFE Group will teach on another – and we all discuss it.

This AM, I want to begin in John 2:1-11 w/ Jesus' 1st recorded miracle – where Jesus is *telegraphing* the message of His coming by turning water into wine.

In sports, telegraphing is when one athlete unintentionally, by their words/actions, alerts their opponent to what they're about to do before they do it – enabling their opponent to gain an advantage.

A QB tips off the defender to where he's going to throw a pass – and it gets intercepted. A pitcher's tips pitches so a hitter knows in advance what pitch is going to be thrown so that he hits it. Or a boxer, by his movements, preps his opponent for what his next punch is going to be so that it's ducked/blocked. In each scenario, the opponent is enabled to take advantage of the player *telegraphing* their next move.

In this text, Jesus intentionally telegraphs His ministry so that we all can piece together who He really is and why He came – *to seek and save the lost*.

On the 3rd day, there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there; and both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding. When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to Him, "They have no wine." And Jesus said to her, "What business do you have w/ Me, woman? My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servants, "Whatever He tells you, do it." Now there were (6) stone waterpots standing there for the Jewish custom of purification, containing two or three measures each. Jesus said to them, "Fill the pots w/ water." So, they filled them up to the brim. And He said to them, "Draw some out now and take it to the headwaiter." And they took it to him. When the headwaiter tasted the water which had become wine, and didn't know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the headwaiter called the groom, and said to him, "Every man serves the good wine first, and when the guests are drunk, then he serves the poorer wine; but you have kept the good wine until now." This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee to reveal His glory; and His disciples believed in Him. John 2:1-11

Weddings are w/out a doubt one of the most joyous occasions in a person's life. Whether you have a raging party or if you elope to the Justice of the Peace – a wedding is a special time in a person's life.

Whenever I think of weddings, I'm reminded of the nervous pastor who was performing his 1st wedding – and as fate would have it, about ½ way thru the ceremony, he lost his place and went totally blank – leading to a really awkward silence. Desperate to get back on track, he remembered one of his seminary profs advising that if he ever forgot what to say next, he should just quote the 1st Scripture that came to mind. So, out of nowhere, the pastor shouted – ***Father, forgive them for they don't know what they do.***

While this wasn't the case in this story, there was a problem afoot that required Jesus' attention that provides us w/ some valuable insight regarding our fellowship w/ Him. But first, let me offer a little context and background to this event.

A Jewish wedding marked the culmination of the lengthy engagement period. During this time, which often lasted several months, the couple was considered legally man/wife, however, they did not live together, nor had they consummated the marriage. Then, when the time arrived for the wedding (usually on a Wednesday), the groom/his friends would go to the bride's house to escort the bride/her attendants to the groom's house, where a week-long ceremony/banquet would be held ending w/ the exchange of vows.

This wedding feast was a huge deal as it was viewed as a test run for the groom to see if he could provide enough food/wine for the guests as a sign that he could provide for his wife/children in the future. To run out of food/wine over the week would've been a major

failure. It'd convey the idea that he couldn't provide for his wife and family staining his reputation.

Of course, in this story, after a few days into the wedding week, the bride/groom ran out of wine – which was a huge no-no! (1) B/c it would've been a major social faux pas; and (2) Wine in Jewish life was a sign of blessing/joy – basically causing the party attendees to see this marriage as not blessed of God.

Enter Mary. The fact that Mary came to Jesus when the wine had run out suggests that she had some family obligation to this groom and didn't want him to experience any shame/social disgrace. So, **Mary puts Jesus on the spot** – and His response is perplexing. He said – *My hour hasn't yet come.* Yet He launches His earthly ministry by changing water into wine.

As I've pondered this passage in light of following Jesus, there are (2) things I want you to see. The 1st has to do w/ **salvation**; while the 2nd has to do w/ **service**.

I A Lesson about **SALVATION**

Let's begin w/ an obvious question. Why did God become a man, live a sinless life, and die on a cross?

The answer is found in passages like **Luke 19:10** – *For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost.*

Or **Mark 10:45** – *The Son of Man didn't come to be served, but to serve, and give His life as a ransom for many.*

Or **John 3:16** – For God so loved the world, He gave His only Son...

This is the reason God became flesh and made His dwelling among us – to rescue/redeem humanity. And this truth is **telegraphed** here in this miracle 3½ yrs before the actual sacrifice of Jesus. **Let me explain.**

At a special event such as a wedding, when the guests arrived, they'd participate in the ritual of **ceremonial cleansing**. As they arrived, b/c their feet were dirty from the dusty roads, servants would wash their feet. Before they ate, servants would pour clean water over their hands. Then after they ate, w/ the ceremonial clean water, the servants would wash the dishes. All of this purified water was kept in special pots placed in advance to ensure everyone's purity.

So, when the time comes to provide the wine, Jesus could've had the servants fill the empty wine vats (which some scholars believe represents to emptiness of the Jewish faith at that time) – but instead, Jesus had them fill the ceremonial waterpots. **WHY?** I believe it's b/c of the message He wanted to send. While His time to make an atonement for sin hadn't yet arrived, what had arrived was His opportunity to reveal His true identity and share the reason for His coming.

In this 1st miracle, Jesus was *telegraphing* that He had stepped into humanity to seek/save the lost by taking sinful, filthy lives (like ours), and thru a miracle of grace, transform them into a joyous, blessing of God.

So from the very 1st miracle – Jesus wanted His disciples to see that He was far more than a Rabbi-teacher, but that He was the promised Messiah/Savior. And for those who follow Jesus, *it speaks to becoming convinced that Jesus was who He said He was and did what He said He'd do.*

II A Lesson about SERVICE

The lessons on service occur in Mary/Jesus' exchange w/ the servants. On enlisting Jesus to fix the situation, Mary tells the helpers to do exactly what Jesus tells them to do to solve the wine shortage. *I believe her words to do what Jesus says to do apply to us as well.*

A Do What Jesus ASKS You to Do

Have you ever thought of the many instructions Jesus told His followers to do? LIKE – *love the Lord w/ all your heart, mind, soul, and strength and love your neighbors as we want to be loved.* He tells us *to forgive those who have sinned against us* – and *to carry the load of our enemies a 2nd mile* – and the list goes on. Folks – for the believer... these are **non-negotiable!**

WHY – B/c *the Christian life is doing whatever Jesus tells us to do!* Serving the Lord requires **DOING** what He tells us to do when He tells us to do it. And this is why God's Word and the learning to tune our lives to the frequency of the H.S. are so essential.

I think of Jesus' words in Luke 6:46 – *Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and don't do the things I say?* DYK the word **Lord** means boss/master.

ASK – Can you imagine your boss asking you to do something and you telling them NO? What do you typically do? You do it! b/c you want to keep your job.

SEE – While we can do nothing to EARN or LOSE our salvation, God does expect us to DO the things His Word and H.S. prompt us to do – but out of a grateful heart for what He has done for us.

Truth is – we all serve God out of 1 of 3 motivations. (1) *fear* of the consequences; (2) We're looking for a *reward*; or (3) We want to express our *love/gratitude*. Yet it all begins w/ doing what God asks us to do.

B **OBEY** Even When You Don't Know Why

Honestly – this is my favorite part of the story b/c I can only imagine what was going thru their minds.

Jesus told them to take the (6) stone jars used for ceremonial purification and to fill them to the brim w/ more water. I'm certain this seemed crazy to the servants who knew they were out of wine. I mean... it would've made more sense for Jesus to have asked them to run to Kroger or Publix, or to the neighbor.

But Jesus told them to put water in the ceremonial waterpots. This is an amazing nuance in this story. These pots didn't contain drinking water, but water for washing feet, hand washing, and washing dishes. Even though it didn't make sense, they obeyed.

And this is where the story gets really wonky b/c Jesus then asks them to pour some into a cup and take it to their boss (the head waiter) to sample.

If I'd been one of those servants, I'm not so sure what I would've done, but I'm sure I'd feared for my job. Taking dishwater to your boss to drink isn't the way to get a raise/promotion. At best, he'd likely spew it out and fire them on the spot! And yet, *they did exactly what Jesus requested*. They poured what they thought was wash water into a goblet and handed it to their boss – and likely, watched anxiously for his reaction.

Can I be honest? I view these servants as role models for us b/c when God tells them to do something and while they didn't understand why – they still obeyed. Let's be honest – *it's much easier to follow God when it makes sense than when it doesn't make sense*.

I think of Moses – called to lay down a stick. Or *Gideon* – called to choose 300 men b/c they lapped the water. Or *Daniel* called to fast instead of eat from Neb. Table. Or *Elijah* – called to trek some 100 miles across famine-infested land where he was the most wanted man in Israel to find a pagan widow. Or *God* wrapping Himself in flesh in the person of Jesus to become the Savior of the world. And I can go on! Yet God uses unusual ways that seldom make earthly sense.

Obeying when it doesn't make sense. Can I tell you something important – seldom does God's way make earthly sense. God's economy is almost always uniquely different from the economy of this world – and yet it always requires our complete obedience... even when it doesn't make sense to us.

Of course, *the alternative to trusting is disobeying* – or taking matters into our own hands.

In 1 Samuel 15, we find the story of when King Saul disobeyed the Lord. Instead of destroying everyone and everything, including the livestock of his enemy, as the Lord had commanded, Saul kept some for himself. Then, when Saul heard the prophet Samuel was arriving, he hid the sheep/oxen behind his tent. Of course, Samuel arrives to the bleating of sheep and mooing of oxen – and Sammy calls Saul out telling him that he'd disobeyed the Lord! Of course, Saul tried to spin the story by saying he mostly obeyed God, but of course, that didn't fly w/ Samuel or God.

WHY – B/c partial obedience is always disobedience.

In response, Samuel issued one of the most powerful principles in God's Word. *Does the Lord have as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as He does in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than a sacrifice... 1 Samuel 15:22)*

POINT – There's always something better than giving God your time, money, and talents – and that is giving Him a *heart of obedience* in every area of your life. In this 1st miracle – we learn that to follow Jesus requires we truly see/believe that He is God's sole solution to the problem of sin – and then, once we believe, we obey His leading in our lives – even when it doesn't make sense to us.

During the summer b/w my junior/senior year of college, I served at a mega-church on the north side of Atlanta where the pastor had taken me under his wing and had high hopes for my future – so much so, that he offered me a full-time job to come onto his staff and run the college ministry. As I was praying about the opportunity, God impressed on my heart to reject the offer and go to the mission field w/ the IMB.

When I laid out the pros/cons. When I considered what serving at this church could do for my future. When I considered the pay he was offering. When I sought the counsel of friends/family – it made no earthly sense to go overseas – and yet in my heart of hearts, I knew it was what God was calling me to do. Still, when I told the pastor that I was going to decline his offer to go to the mission field, he told me to my face that I was a fool and that I'd one day regret rejecting his offer!

Can I tell you? While it made no earthly sense, it still stands as one of the most critical decisions of my life. So much of who I am today, what I believe, how I view God, and my convictions of ministry, were shaped by all the things I experienced during my time overseas. I can say w/ absolute certainty, that while it made NO earthly sense – it was the correct decision to turn down his offer and follow the Lord to Europe.

What about you? I think this story teaches us that following Jesus begins w/ a willingness to serve Him even when it doesn't make good earthly sense.