

John 2:1-11 "Christ's First Miracle"

JOH 2:1-11 "On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, 2 and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. 3 When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine." 4 "Dear woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My time has not yet come." 5 His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." 6 Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons. 7 Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim. 8 Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." They did so, 9 and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside 10 and said, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now." 11 This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him."

As we come to our text this morning we are going to witness the beginning of the public ministry of Jesus Christ, appropriately enough, through a miracle. But the miracle itself is not the most important lesson we learn from our text. This is not simply an historical account for the sake of such.

We need to keep in mind the unique approach the apostle John takes with this historical account as the Holy Spirit has led him to reveal Jesus Christ as very God all throughout this gospel.

Up to this point John has introduced us to John the Baptist in an effort to show the contrast between the Old Covenant which was lifeless through the law, and the Lamb of God who came to take away the sin of the world so as to bring life eternal.

There is no greater indictment to how the Jews had missed this most important visitor to this world than not to realize their Creator and Savior was in their very presence.

JOH 1:9-11 "The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. 11 He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him."

JOH 1:24-25 "Now some Pharisees who had been sent 25 questioned him, "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?" 26 "I baptize with water," John replied, "but among you stands one you do not know."

When John the Baptist says, that they did not know this Messiah it is more than simply not recognizing who Jesus is, it also speaks to the fact that they did not have a relationship with the living God they claim as their own.

And so, when we come to this miracle in Cana we are going to see the stark difference between what Jesus supplies as opposed to what the law supplies.

JOH 2:1-2 "On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, 2 and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding."

John points out that this was the third day, probably in reference to the last event which involved Nathaniel becoming a follower of Christ, and so we have some idea as to how close this event was to the calling of the disciples, at this point only involving five men.

But here we have a wedding taking place at Cana in Galilee and Mary, the mother of Jesus, is going to play a prominent role. Some have argued that one of the people getting married here in Cana may be a relative of Mary, or at least a good friend since she is not only invited but may have also been involved in the planning of this wedding.

And then in verse two, as almost as an after-thought, we see that Jesus and His disciples were also invited. It seems likely that since the disciples were probably not friends of the bride or groom they were allowed to be a part of this celebration for the sake of Mary and Jesus.

What is interesting here is that Joseph, the man who raised Jesus, is not mentioned. No one really knows that much about Joseph from the time of Jesus being 12 years old when both Mary and Joseph are seen together as they look for their son who slipped away and ended up in the temple area discussing the things of God with the leaders of Jerusalem.

In all likelihood Joseph had died. Remember, Jesus is about 30 years old at the beginning of His ministry and it will be only three

short years before He is hung on the cross for the penalty of our sins. The two people we should expect to see at the foot of the cross would be both parents of Jesus. And yet, Jesus only addresses His mother when He asks John to take care of her, implying that Joseph is not around to do that.

So the stage is set. There is a celebration taking place and Mary, Jesus and His disciples are there. But there appears to be a problem that any caterer of such an event would consider to be disastrous.

JOH 2:3 "When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine."

Wine was a beverage the Jews used for a variety of reasons, not the least of which was to be used for partying on special occasions. "It's okay, we've run out of finger foods, and the ice sculpture is melting, but we've got a crisis with the wine having run out."

Someone might ask why wine was being used at all and was actually condoned by Jesus. Well, I'm not going to go into a lengthy discussion of the use of alcoholic beverages, but it should be pointed out that all throughout Scripture we see the use of wine in both good and bad contexts.

In fact, the first time we see the use of wine in the Scriptures, it is associated with Noah who had become drunk with it.

GEN 9:20-22 "Noah, a man of the soil, proceeded to plant a vineyard. 21 When he drank some of its wine, he became drunk and lay uncovered inside his tent. 22 Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father's nakedness and told his two brothers outside."

The misuse of wine in this case led to Noah being humiliated and dishonored. The second time we see the use of wine in the Scriptures it is used in a celebration, where Abraham is blessed by Melchizedek, a priest of God.

GEN 14:18-20 "Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, 19 and he blessed Abram, saying, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. 20 And blessed be God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand." Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything."

Now, I'm not suggesting that because wine is condoned by God and allowed to be used by God's people that we should all of a

sudden open up our fellowships with wine being served. Often times our cultures will dictate the use of such things in certain ways.

In Europe, for example, the church over there in many places has no such reservations. Wine is not seen as some taboo. Here in this country, however, the use of wine and other alcoholic beverages has a stigma attached to it by our society because of many of the abuses.

Just go back to the early part of the twentieth century. We actually had Federal laws enacted to prohibit the sale of alcohol. And so, cultural settings will often dictate how we are to act in any particular society. And so, there will be times when we may need to curb certain liberties we have in Christ.

We saw this when Paul addressed the eating of meat sacrificed to idols. Under certain circumstances there was nothing wrong with it. Under other circumstances it was to be avoided. It wasn't the actual eating of meat that was the problem, it was circumstances which could have led some to sin against their consciences which were the problem.

And the same is true of wine. There is no biblical mandate that says people cannot drink wine, and by implication certain other alcoholic beverages. However, there is a biblical mandate that restricts how that beverage is to be used. And Paul points this out to the church in Ephesus.

EPH 5:18-20 "Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. 19 Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, 20 always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Paul is not prohibiting the drinking of wine here. He is prohibiting getting drunk, and in turn advocating a higher calling of walking in the Spirit.

Now, again, don't misunderstand me here on this point. If you believe that to drink wine is sinful for you then you should not partake. However, it must be pointed out that if we are to be biblical Christians we must not create laws which God does not create, or restrictions which God has not put in place.

Having said all of that we've still got a problem. The wine has run out at this wedding feast in Cana, and Mary, the mother of Jesus takes the responsibility to solve it, again possibly because this was part of her function at this celebration as she helped organize it.

But notice who Mary goes to for the solution. She goes to Jesus. Why does she do this? Well, the context leads us to think that she truly believes He can solve the problem which in this case can only be done miraculously. Mary understood enough about the role of Jesus as the Son of God that she could even ask for His involvement.

But notice what Jesus says.

JOH 2:4 "Dear woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My time has not yet come."

This is the translation of the NIV. Other translations leave us with an apparent curt reply by Jesus to His mother.

The KJV puts it this way. "Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee?"

The NKJV says, "Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me?"

The NASB gives us this. "Woman, what does that have to do with Me?"

Into today's world, at least in the English language, this kind of response could be seen as dishonoring. But I can assure you it is not. Remember, it is Jesus, who is none other than God who gave this command to Moses to give to Israel.

EXO 20:12 "Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you."

For Jesus to dishonor His mother here would be tantamount to Him sinning against His mother which Jesus could not do. The Greek text literally reads, "What to Me and you?"

Well, that really clears it up. The import of this saying really has more to do with Jesus making the point that now that His ministry has begun, He and only He can and will determine what is best to glorify God. That cannot be forced upon Him by any person, including His mother.

This is why the NIV translates it, "Dear woman, why do you involve me?" "My time has not yet come."

Jesus is the one to act only on the timetable of His Heavenly Father. And so, what Mary is doing in asking Jesus to get involved is not necessarily a bad thing. But Jesus is making it clear that she needs to be careful not to presume that simply because she has a need, or that simply because she is His earthly mother, that that alone will determine what God must do at any given time.

Growing up a Roman Catholic, I was always taught that the reason we pray to Mary is precisely because of a passage like this. Being the mother of Jesus, (or as they like to put it, the Mother of God, which of course cannot be true since God cannot have a mother, since God had no beginning), but being the mother of Jesus it is assumed that because of His love for His mother He'll do anything she requests.

The Roman Catholic logic is then that if we want to make sure we get to Jesus we go through the one woman He cannot deny, thus ensuring we get to the Lord with our request. In this way she becomes CO-mediator.

Yet, what do the Scriptures teach us?

1TI 2:5-6 "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave himself as a ransom for all men - the testimony given in its proper time."

Mary would be appalled that anyone would presume to place on her a role which belongs only to God. And what we see here in our text is that Jesus is firmly but politely telling His mother that she has no business presuming that He must do this for her.

And yet, in this response He is not saying that this is not out of the will of God, only that His time has not yet come. In other words, 'dear woman, I will determine when and how this request will take place and to what end.'

And by the way, I failed to mention earlier, but the fact that Jesus doesn't respond by addressing Mary as mother, but woman, does tell us that despite the fact that she bore Him, He is no mere man with a mere earthly attachment to Mary.

He is clearly differentiating Himself as One who is no longer to be viewed as Mary's little boy, but the Son of Man who came to redeem a people for Himself. He is God and Savior. In fact, this is touched on when a group of Jews who knew Jesus reminded Him that His mother and brothers were waiting outside for Him.

MAT 12:47-50 "Someone told him, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you." 48 He replied to him, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" 49 Pointing to his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers. 50 For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."

Jesus was not blurring the distinctions between a mother, a brother and a sister, only that there is no one particular earthly relationship which takes precedence over His most cherished desire and that is a relationship of love and peace as He reconciles us back to the Father. No one gets preferential treatment simply because they know Him or are related to Him. He came to die for all of His people.

Make no mistake, the Scriptures point out that Mary is most blessed among women. But she is blessed only because God chose to use her by bringing the Son of God into this world as a man, not because she was any more deserving than any other human being in this world.

She realized she was a sinner in need of a Savior. When she visited her relative Elizabeth she honored God with a prayer, often referred to as Mary's Song, in the gospel of Luke. In this prayer she acknowledges God as her Savior.

LUK 1:46-47 "And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord 47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior..."

Only sinners need a Savior. And so for anyone to suggest that Mary was not a sinner like every other human being, in need of a Savior, is to deify Mary. And that is nothing short of idolatry.

Jesus loved His mother. But His mother was not unlike a number of other very special servants God used to bring forth His plan to save mankind.

"My time has not yet come," Jesus said. This is a statement which is associated with that time in which He would die for our sins. It doesn't necessarily mean it wasn't time to perform this miracle.

Many times we hear this phrase used throughout His earthly ministry. When Jesus was almost taken by the Jews to be mistreated and possibly killed we read this.

JOH 7:30 "At this they tried to seize him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his time had not yet come."

In other words, His time to die.

JOH 8:18-20 "I am one who testifies for myself; my other witness is the Father, who sent me. 19 Then they asked him, "Where is your father?" "You do not know me or my Father," Jesus replied. "If you knew me, you would know my Father also." 20 He spoke these words while teaching in the temple area near the place where the offerings were put. Yet no one seized him, because his time had not yet come."

And yet, when the fullness of time came Jesus knew it and was willing to give His life.

JOH 13:1 "It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love."

And so, part of what Jesus was saying to Mary is that My time has not yet come in this matter which is to do all that the Father desires, and therefore what I do will be done according to My Father's timetable, which in this case did not exclude such a miracle as Jesus was about to perform, which is why Mary responds the way she does.

JOH 2:5 "His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

Notice how Mary has submitted to her son. She has humbled herself in such a way as to recognize Jesus as the One who has the authority of God and was willing to defer to whatever He chose to do. And yet, she is still anticipating that He will do something.

JOH 2:6-10 "Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons. 7 Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim. 8 Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." They did

so, 9 and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside 10 and said, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now."

I'm only going to have enough time to touch on the actual event this morning we have before us. Next week I am going to deal with the spiritual implications here for Israel and us.

What we've got here is a Jewish wedding which would often be celebrated for days which is one reason the wine may have given out. This is the reason for the mention of the big stone water pots.

JOH 2:6 "Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons."

If you take six of these water pots which could hold up to 30 gallons you end up with a maximum of 180 gallons of water which are about to be turned to 180 gallons of wine. That's a lot of wine.

As one commentator points out, "Reckoning a half pint to a glass, these vessels would contain about 2400 servings of wine -- certainly enough to supply a large number of people for several days." (Merrill C. Tenney)

In this city of Cana it would not be uncommon for many people, who all knew each other, to participate in such a festive occasion. And so, if you've got a couple of hundred people over a two or three day period involved in this celebration, 180 gallons of wine probably wouldn't be too much.

Again making an assumption of 200 hundred people, if you do the math, each person would have 12 glasses of wine spread over a period of two or three days.

But the point to this passage is not just how much wine has been created here, but how it happened.

JOH 2:7 "Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim."

Keep in mind that these water jars were designed to be used for ceremonial washings. In other words they really weren't meant to

be used to drink out of. But here Jesus is going to assign to them a different role. Again, as I said earlier we're going to delve into the ramifications of the spiritual significance of these things next week.

But He commands them to fill these water pots up with water which means they had to either take them to a nearby well to accomplish this, or somehow get the water from the well to the pots at the celebration, since they would have been very heavy after being filled.

It may have sounded like an odd request but these servants did this. They not only filled these water pots, but we're told they filled them to the brim.

JOH 2:8 "Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." They did so...."

Up to this point we don't see the miracle. We only have obedient servants doing all Jesus tells them. The miracle is seen in the tasting.

JOH 2:9-10 "...and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside and said, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now."

The master of the banquet was the person who was in charge of the whole affair, from food to placement of guests and so forth. He was sometimes referred to as the table master.

And so, it was natural that this person was to taste the wine before distributing it to the guests since his reputation was also on the line. Now this had to be puzzling to the master of the banquet since he didn't order this wine, though he was obviously aware that the wine was running out.

But since he's now got 180 gallons of the stuff he's not going to complain. But when he tastes the wine he is amazed at the quality. In fact, he thinks the bridegroom is responsible for this and so he calls him over.

JOH 2:10 "... and said, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now."

This was and probably is still a common practice. You bring the good stuff out first to impress your guests. But once they've had a few drinks their palates are a little less discriminating and don't seem to care if the quality goes down a few notches.

But in this case the opposite has taken place and this guy wants to commend the bridegroom for saving the best for last.

JOH 2:11 "This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him."

What we'll see next week is how God is going to save the best for last for us. We'll see how this entire event is a picture of the insufficiency of the law and how Christ is the joy given to all who partake of His wine.

This salvation is nothing short of miraculous and this particular event is a foretaste of what is to come. Don't miss next week.