

The Gospel of John

Turning Water into Wine

John 2:1-11

INTRODUCTION

ILLUSTRATION:

The Chicago suburb of Oak Lawn had a problem - motorists weren't coming to a complete stop at stop signs. So in 2007 the Mayor came up with a creative solution. He added a second, smaller octagonal sign behind the town's 50 or so stop signs with different messages:

"STOP

And smell the roses."

"STOP

No really, you gotta stop."

"STOP

Or I'm Telling Your Mom."

"STOP

In the naaaame of love."

And – it worked!!! People stopped at the stop signs. The additional signs were so imaginative and humorous people laughed and obeyed the Stop sign. Everybody laughed...except the Illinois Department of Transportation which deemed the signs violated the Federal Uniform Traffic Control Act, and threatened to withhold funds if the signs weren't removed. Sadly, the Mayor had to comply.

The Mayor believed that if he could just get the motorists to pay attention, then he could get his message across. The message...STOP! It was an important message...he was using special signs to get it across.

Signs have always been used to get messages across to people. Whether square, rectangular, triangular, or octagonal...there is a message tied to the sign. Sometimes the sign's message is very important and even critical.

In our text this morning we are going to hear of Jesus' first sign. It was performed at a

wedding feast in Cana of Galilee where He turned water into wine.

All Stand and Read Scripture

John 2:1-11 (NASB)

2 On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there; 2 and both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding. 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 that have to do with us? My hour has not yet come.” 5 His mother *said to the servants, “Whatever He says to you, do it.” 6 Now there were six stone waterpots set there for the Jewish custom of purification, containing twenty or thirty gallons each. 7 Jesus *said to them, “Fill the waterpots with water.” So they filled them up to the brim. 8 And He *said to them, “Draw *some* out now and take it to the headwaiter.” So they took it *to him*. 9 When the headwaiter tasted the water which had become wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the headwaiter *called the bridegroom, 10 and *said to him, “Every man serves the good wine first, and when *the people* have drunk freely, *then he serves* the poorer *wine*; *but you* have kept the good wine until now.” 11 This beginning of *His* signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him.

Prayer

In our text this morning we're told: “This (changing water into wine) was the first of his SIGNS, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.” John 2:11.

One scholar went through the Gospels and found at least 35 different miracle/signs that Jesus did during His ministry. But John explained at the end of his Gospel: “Now there are also many other things that Jesus did.

John 21:25 (NASB)

25 And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they *were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself *would not contain the books that *would be written.

In other words, Jesus probably did a whole lot more MIRACLES during His ministry, but these 35 or so that are listed in the Gospels were intended to teach us something. They were like SIGNPOSTS showing us God's message.

And also John told us in his Gospel...

John 20:30-31 (NASB)

30 Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.

In other words...the miracles that Jesus did were intended to get people to PAY ATTENTION! This is the Son of God...this is the one you need to listen to!

I. WHAT ABOUT THE WINE?

BUT, before we do that, I want to spend just a couple moments addressing something that many people struggle with in this passage. To the modern day reader the free flowing wine at parties such as this one in Scripture lead some to think that this “quite a party”. It would seem that many were drunk and that many there were “feeling no pain.”

Well...no. That’s not was happening here. The wine they drank was not like the type folks get down at the Liquor store. In the Jewish culture of Jesus’ day they drank their wine mixed with water...lots of it.

According to the Book of Maccabees 15:39 (written around 60 B.C.) “It is harmful to drink wine alone, or again, to drink water alone, while wine mixed with water is sweet and delicious...”

The Jewish Talmud talks about the traditions of the Rabbis in Jesus’ day, and several times tells us that the normal mixture is said to be 1 part wine to 3 parts water.

So, just so we understand... Jesus made GOOD wine but it was “watered down” wine and nowhere near as alcoholic as many folks would presume.

Now that that’s out of the way... let’s get to the purpose of Jesus’ miracles. As I said, first and foremost Jesus’ miracles were to get people’s attention.

Now, I’m going to repeat! A SIGN is something that God used to tell us something. There was a message there...something God wanted us to see about Jesus. And so for the better part of this sermon we’re going to focus on the purpose of Biblical signs in general and of this particular sign in John 2.

II. THE PURPOSE OF MIRACLES.

ILLUSTRATION:

According to a survey conducted by the Pew Forum on Religion in 2010, a vast majority of Americans, nearly 80%, believe in miracles. Even half of the people who are unaffiliated with any particular religion say they believe in miracles. This would indicate that despite our moral decline, there is still a religious undertone still remaining among the people in the United States.

Back in Exodus we read of one of the miracles that God did through Moses, and the magicians who were consulted by the Pharaoh were astonished and warned Pharaoh: “This is the finger of God.” (Exodus 8:19). Miracles were the times when God interceded in the course of human history.

And as we pointed out earlier, the signs God used were intended to get people’s attention. In fact, that’s exactly what Jesus said these miracles were for. A little later on in the gospel of John Jesus is challenged to PROVE who He is. Ordinarily, in order to prove something like this you’d need at least 2 or 3 witnesses, but Jesus tells his audience – He actually had more than two or three witnesses.

1. There was John the Baptist’s testimony.
2. There was the testimony of the Father (when Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist)

3. There was the testimony of Biblical prophecy.

4. And then there was the testimony of the miracles He did:

“...the works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me.” John 5:36

Essentially, Jesus’ miracles were CALLING CARDS. They were done by Jesus to give credibility and authority to His ministry. Or as it says in our text today of His first sign – it “manifested His glory.” (John 2:11)

Now, let’s go back to the miracle in our text today where Jesus turned the water into wine. This miracle was not part of God’s original game plan. We’re told “When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.” And Jesus said to her, **“Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come.”**

ILLUSTRATION:

I want the youth to pay special attention. This **MAY** sound like a comment in the Bible that you **MIGHT** be tempted to use. After all Jesus used it on **His** mom!

Your mom says, "Take out the trash!"

You respond **"Woman, what does that have to do with me? My hour has not come!"**

"Make your bed!"

"Woman...what does that have to do with me? My hour has not come!"

By the **look** of some of the **expressions** on your mom's faces, I suspect that if you do try this you may discover that your hour will come sooner than you might think!"

After all Jesus was 30 years old AND He was God in the flesh. A claim that none of us can make. Right?

(PAUSE)

But now seriously, as Jesus’ response may sound flippant to our ears, scholars assure us that, in the culture of that day, this would not have been considered an offensive or insulting comment. But there is little question that Jesus **is** upset about his mother’s request. Here He is about 30 years old and His mother is trying to run His life for Him.

MY HOUR HAS NOT YET COME!!!

What’s Jesus saying???. He’s saying this wasn’t what He had planned on. This wasn’t part of the game plan. He knows exactly what He intends to do and when He intends to do it...and here His mom is trying to get Him to do a miracle.

Now bear in mind – this is the first SIGN Jesus has ever done. He hasn’t done anything like this before. And, as far as we know, Mary has never seen Him do anything miraculous before. But somehow she knows He can do something and she sort of wants to show Him off.

And Jesus is annoyed. He tries to remind her that "**My time has not yet come!**" But it's like Mary doesn't even hear Him. She says to the servants, "**Do whatever he tells you**" (**John 2:5**) and then she quietly just walks away.

- Now, this is JESUS – King of Kings and Lord of Lords.
- This is Jesus – the Son of God, that came down out of Heaven.
- This is Jesus – Who spoke in the beginning and caused the heavens and earth to come into existence.
- This is Jesus – who will one day come back a 2nd TIME and will judge the living and the dead.

HE DOESN'T HAVE TO LISTEN TO THIS WOMAN!

But does He??? Yes, He does. He listens to her. He honors her. And He does exactly what she asks of him. Now, it wasn't according to the game plan...and yet Jesus honored her request.

III. THE MESSAGE BEHIND THE SIGN.

What we will see, as a common thread, throughout all of Jesus' signs and miracles, is that there is a secondary message behind the sign.

Jesus chose to obey His mom. But He also chose to do it the right way. We're told "**there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons**". Jesus said to the servants, "**Fill the jars with water.**" And they filled them up to the brim." **John 2:6-7.**

Now, what did Jesus tell the servants to fill with water? **Stone Jars.** But these were not just any old stone jars – these were jars that were used for **purification**. Jesus could have had the servants use pots and pans. He could have used them use the jars that OTHER wine had been stored in (I mean, after all, those containers are empty now). But instead He instructs them to fill **THESE** jars - jars for purification. These jars were not used for wine... they were used for water.

So why use these jars? Well, a couple of thoughts come to mind. First, since these jars never had wine in them, no one could accuse Jesus of simply finding jars that HAD had wine in them and fudging a little here. These jars had never had even the hint of the flavor of wine. Thus, when the water in the jars turned to wine, there was no question where this wine had come from – this was a miracle!

Jesus used jars dedicated to purification because that's why He came to earth. Zechariah prophesied about the coming of the Messiah/Jesus and said:

"On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness." (Zechariah 13:1).

You see, I believe that when Jesus chose those stone jars for purification He did it deliberately because this was the purpose of His ministry. The reason He came was to purify people from the stain and filth of their sins and uncleanness.

ILLUSTRATION:

As I thought about these stone jars Jesus used for this first miracle I was reminded of the packaging you see in grocery stores. The pictures you see on the boxes of cereal or frozen food – they’re just pictures. But those pictures on the outside let you know what is inside the box. I’m thinking Jesus used these purification jars for the same purpose.

And the more I thought about, the more I realized God has done the same thing with water baptism. It’s a picture of the purification God does in our lives when we become Christians.

1 Peter 3:20b-21 (NASB)

...when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through *the water*. 21 Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

Baptism is part of what God asks us to do to accept His salvation. But there’s nothing magical in the water. It’s not like you’re washing dirt from your body but it is the way we appeal to God for a clear conscience. In **Romans 6**, God compares this simple concept of going under water to being buried with Christ...and then rising with Him to live a new life. You’re not really being buried in a grave – but that’s the imagery God wants to place in our minds. At the point where we’re buried in the waters – we die to our past. And when we rise out of that watery grave we are resurrected to live a new life.

CONCLUSION:

There are people out there who don’t think we need to DO anything to be saved. After all Jesus died for our sins on the cross to save us from our sins. How could there be anything that we could do to add to that?

Now there’s a lot of truth to that position. You can’t do anything to BUY your salvation. You can’t earn a place in heaven. You either depend on the blood of Jesus Christ or it is not happening. But it’s really poor theology, and poor Bible application to say that we don’t have to “do” anything to accept God’s free gift of salvation.

For example, in Acts 2 (the day of Pentecost) Peter has just been preaching to the crowds about Jesus – that He was the fulfillment of prophecy, the one promised throughout the Old Testament and that the Jews in this audience had been responsible for His crucifixion. The people in the crowd are so convicted by what they’ve heard that they interrupt Peter and ask...“**Brethern, what shall we DO?**”

Peter tells them what to DO: “**Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.**” **Acts 2:38.**

What did Peter tell the crowds to “do?” “**Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.**” They asked a direct question and he gave them a direct answer. This is what you “do” to be saved.

The Family of God.