

JESUS TURNED WATER INTO WINE

(At the Wedding in Cana of Galilee when the Wine ran Out)

John 2:1-12 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson -- A New Year's Day Message

At the close of a wedding ceremony, a little girl exclaimed to her mother in disbelief, “Mommy, has the lady changed her mind?” Her Mom replied, “Honey, what do you mean?” The little girl answered, “Mom, she walked in with one man and now she walked back down the aisle with another man.” Weddings always have a knack of magnetically drawing out the unexpected. It was no different in Jesus’ day as He came with His first chosen, five disciples, as invited guests of an unnamed couple getting married just 8-10 miles northeast of Nazareth. The five disciples accompanying Jesus were Andrew, John, Peter, Philip, and Nathanael, who came from this little town of Cana in Galilee. (John 21: 2) Here on this platform, in one wedding, the bride got sick to her stomach, and she began gagging and ran from the marriage altar. After losing her last meal, she felt better, as we all waited for her return. The wedding was delayed, but it wasn’t over. In another wedding in Minnesota, one of the bridesmaids began to pass out on the way upstairs, before the bridesmaids came in. One of the wedding assistants quickly helped this dear friend of ours to exchange dresses with her, and without too many people knowing, this new assisting bridesmaid made the wedding come off without a hitch. When my sister Ruth was married to Bob, the plan for the wedding guests was so large, she rented a large Baptist church in Hindman, Kentucky in place of our church, Big Branch Fellowship Chapel. On the evening of the wedding, we got 12 inches of snow and only twenty or so people could make it to the wedding. Most everyone at the wedding had a part in the wedding. That was sad, and to complicate the matter, Bob’s Volkswagen broke down, so I was the driver that took Ruth and Bob to Hazard, Kentucky, twenty miles away to the La Citadel Motel, As I drove our Nash Rambler from Hindman to Hazard, through the deep snow, the newlyweds often kept saying, “Be careful; drive slowly.”

If I were to ask you to recall any strange, unexpected happenings at your own wedding, stories would go on for hours. At this wedding in Cana of Galilee, five strange and unexpected happenings occurred. Why did John the beloved disciple, who leaned on Jesus’ bosom, why did he tell this particular story about this wedding of this unknown, unnamed couple? It has to be because this was Jesus’ first sign or miracle, John 1: 11, but John 20:30-31 tells us more of the reason. We read, “Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing, you may have life in His name.” Let’s look at these five unexpected happenings written here so we will all believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that we would have life in His Name.”

FIRST OF ALL, THERE WAS AN UNEXPECTED NEED. (I.) Notice John 2: 1-3. Before we look at this unexpected need, let’s set the stage for this wedding. The day of this wedding feast is the third day—the third day after Jesus found Philip and Nathanael and called them to His side as His disciples. John who never used Mary’s name tells us that the mother of Jesus was there. John’s mother, Jesus’

mother's sister, the wife of Clopas, was with Mary at the cross, along with Mary Magdalene, and Salome, the wife of Zebedee. For John, it made it easier for him to call Mary, the mother of Jesus, without giving her name. This means that Mary, Jesus' mother was John's aunt. It seems from the context of this record by John that Jesus' mother was the wedding assistant in charge of the decorations and the food and drink at this wedding. Mary's husband Joseph is last seen in the New Testament in Luke 2:41-52 although John said the Jews called Jesus in John 6: 42, "the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know." In Matthew 13:55, the people of Nazareth spoke of Jesus, saying, "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother Mary?" In Mark 6:3, the citizens of Nazareth spoke as if Joseph was dead, saying of Jesus, "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?" We know Jesus did not begin His public ministry until He was 30 years of age. Joseph and Mary had four sons together—Mark 6:3, Jesus' stepbrothers named James, Joses, Judas, and Simon, along with an unnamed number of stepsisters. The family of at least seven children depended on Jesus' carpentry, Mary's first-born son for their livelihood, and apparently, as a widow, Mary must have leaned hard upon Jesus for the family's income. Perhaps Mary was a special friend of the parents of this couple being married, and some historical records suggest this could have been John's own wedding. The Bible is silent about the names of this couple getting married, but we can tell this record appears to be an eye-witness account. We read in verse 2 that Jesus was invited along with His first five disciples, including Nathanael who was a resident of Cana of Galilee. That's the setting.

What was this unexpected need? Verse 3 is clear. "When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to Him, "They have no wine." What shame and humiliation this would bring this couple and the parents of this couple if this situation of no wine was not remedied, and this need was not met very soon. Don't believe the view that Jesus and his five disciples were the cause of the need. Why? Verse 2 is clear. Jesus and His disciples were invited guests. Another view is that the people at the wedding were drinking so much they were drunk. No! Wine was a staple drink both in the OT and the NT. Excessive drinking or drunkenness were always condemned. Jesus was not aiding and abetting wedding guests to get drunk and carouse by performing His miracle. If a suggestion is needed to explain the wine running out, it is unlikely that it was because of the poverty of the couple or their parents, but rather it would seem, it was the presence of more friends showing up in Cana than the couple could have ever imagined in their open wedding. It makes me picture this couple as having a love so deep for each other and others that everyone felt at home with them and wanted to be there to celebrate their wedded union. In our needs do we turn to Jesus? It is to Mary's credit that she turned to Jesus to meet her need as being in charge of the food and drink at this wedding. Mary must have often pondered Jesus' miraculous birth, the visit of the shepherds and later, the wise men, and the temple experience with Simeon and Anna. When Mary said to Jesus, "They have no wine," she was asking Jesus for a miracle. She had no idea what Jesus would do, but she trusted that the Lord of the universe would do something to help. How I would to God each of us in our storms and in our struggles would turn so quickly to Jesus when we are faced with unexpected needs. Would to God, we would sing it from the heart. "I Need Thee Every Hour."

SECONDLY, THERE WAS AN UNEXPECTED REACTION. II. Notice verse

4. “And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what does this have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come.” Whatever Jesus said, we can be sure that the tone of His words was not disrespectful or discourteous. This was gentle, but it was a gentle rebuke. Calling her “Woman,” (**Gunai**—Greek) was a title of respect in that day. It was a way to address a mother, a wife, and it was almost like our saying, “Ma’am. Jesus called Mary “Woman,” when He spoke to her from the cross in John 19:26 saying, “Woman, behold your son, (speaking of John) and to John, Jesus said, “Behold your mother!” The phrase, “Woman, what does this have to do with Me,” or as the KJV translates, “Woman, what have I to do with you?”—in both cases, sounds rude to us. Yet, Jesus’ meaning was, “Woman, your purpose and My purpose are not the same. They do not agree. We are not one as to when I should reveal who I am to this sinful world.” Jesus had just begun his public ministry, and I have no doubt He called Mary, “Mother,” up until this day. But Mary could tell there was a shift in Jesus’ relationship with her. She now was no longer to be called, “Mother,” but “Woman.” We see a trace of this in Jesus’ memorable question in Matthew 12: 48-50 where we read, “While He was still speaking to the people, behold, His mother and His brothers stood outside, asking to speak to Him. But He replied to the man who told Him, “Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?” And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, “Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother.” Jesus’ language to Mary shows that the period of His subjection to Joseph and Mary was now at its end, and it showed that His work as Messiah, Lord, and Master had at last begun. Simeon said a sword would pierce Mary’s soul. This must have happened in Luke 2:49 when Jesus was 12, and He told His parents, “Why were you looking for Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?” Jesus was now in His public ministry making it clear to Mary that He was no longer under her roof or supervision, but that from then on, He would always be doing what the Father wanted him to do.

Jesus’ further words, “My hour has not yet come,” was not a refusal of Mary’s request or a putting off of her, but only a postponement as Jesus was waiting for His Father’s timing for working His first miracle, was close, but Jesus was subject only to His Father in doing His will. Three times in the Gospel of John, John recorded Jesus’ words, “My hour has not yet come.” This is the first time, but at the Feast of Booths, Jesus could not be arrested, John 7:30, “because His hour had not yet come.” And in the Temple at the treasury, as Jesus taught, John 8: 20, we read, that no one arrested Jesus, “because His hour was not yet come.” This introduction of Jesus’ hour not yet having come introduced a key element in John’s Gospel record. The hour meant Jesus was living on the Father’s heavenly timetable marked out for Him since the foundation of the world. Beloved, this unexpected response of Jesus is what God is calling for in me and you.

Jesus gently showed His mother His mother/son relationship had to now be replaced with the believer/Savior relationship. Mary would ever and always be Jesus’ earthly physical mother, but in Jesus’ calling, character, and His commission to go to the cross, Jesus neither had, nor has any earthly relative. He

came to be Lord and Savior for every man, woman, boy and girl. Jesus knew what was ahead in His ministry and that His call to go to the cross was pre-ordained in the councils of eternity. Jesus' teaching now to Mary was for her to learn patience in waiting on the timing of the Lord. How often you and I have earnestly prayed and sensed the Holy Spirit saying, "My hour has not yet come." God is aware of our need, and He has promised to supply all our needs, but only in His time. He is never early, never late, but ever, and always, on time. Eccl. 3:1-11a.

THIRDLY, THERE WAS AN UNEXPECTED RESPONSE. (III.) Look with me at Mary's response. She did not cry or retaliate, or act rebuffed or whine or argue with her Lord. Mary got the message and what did she say? John 2:5 is awesome. "His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever He tells you." Jesus had to receive this response with joy but with utter respect for His earthly mother. He must die to save her, but she never tried to pull out a trump card. I have no doubt Mary heard the gentle rebuke of Jesus, and that she perceived in her heart that Jesus' rebuke contained hope and a promise for her unexpected need. She heard Jesus' saying that He was ready to act in the Father's time when His hour was come. Mary could have been so hurt, yet her unexpected response in complete submission and confident expectation showed Mary sensed a miracle was on the way. Mary's response to the waiters, and servants was so necessary for 2 reasons. Without Mary's instruction, (1) the servants may have ignored or disobeyed Jesus' command as being too strange to follow, and they may have seen no need to obey the orders of a guest. If Jesus' instructions didn't seem wise, (2) they might have not agreed to do what He asked them to do. How often do we respond as Mary did? Do we respond in submission and obedience? Do we say, "I'll do whatever You want even when it means waiting for Your timing and your orders. Mary's unexpected response is a shining example for each of us to submit to His will.

FOURTHLY, THERE WERE TWO UNEXPECTED COMMANDS TO OBEY. (IV.) Notice John 2: 6-8. Somewhere there on the place of the wedding, perhaps outside the front door were six stone jars standing—these jars usually held 20-30 gallons. By Jewish law, they were there for ceremonial cleansing, the custom of purification. In Mark 7: 3, we read, "For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands, holding to the tradition of the elders." The total capacity of these six jars was 120-180 gallons of liquid, most commentators say 180 gallons—no small amount. Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water." That was the first command. And we read that **they filled them to the brim.** Command # 2 was "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast." **So, they took it.** Jesus said fill them with water apparently from a nearby well or spring. Picture fresh water from a nearby well or spring and then watching them fill each of the six waterpots. These waiters must have wondered what the master of the feast would say, much less, the guests as they were given water. Has the Lord ever asked you by His command, in the Word, in your spirit, in a command that does not contradict God's Word, though it may not square with your thinking or mine: has the Lord led you to do something strange? Have you ever been told by another person like Mary, to do whatever God tells you to do? If you have delayed, it may be too late, but Abraham obeyed 25 years after he was

commanded to believe God's promise that he at age 100 and Sarah at age 90 would bear a son. Abraham messed up with Hagar, but God gave him with Sarah another chance to obey His strange, and by earthly standards, impossible command.

FIFTHLY, THERE WAS AN UNEXPECTED SIGN, A MIRACLE. (V.)

Notice John 2:1. What day was this? The third day. I see in this sign and miracle a foretaste of God's glory in the cross, the death of Jesus, His burial, and His miraculous resurrection on the third day. Now look at the sign in verses 9-12. Notice this strange and glorious sign and miracle. "When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and he did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom. I love the words of Richard Crashaw in 1649 who said, "In the process, when the conscious water saw its God, it blushed." I love that. Imagine the bridegroom who had no idea why the master of the feast called him. The words he heard were, "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!" The truth is that the first wine served is the best, but he told the bridegroom, "You have reversed the order. Jewish wedding feasts were never drunken brawls or carousing.

Don't ever believe the story that Jesus turned the water into grape juice. No, while grape juice is unfermented, it is grape juice, but when it ferments, it is wine. There is no sin in drinking wine, but there is sin in getting buzzed and endangering our own lives and the life of others. Though I don't drink wine, I must have integrity about Jesus' miracle. I rejoice that we use grape juice for communion because so many in America are addicted to alcohol. Yet wine is not sinful to drink unless we misuse it. Food is good, but gluttony is evil. Wine is good, but drunkenness is evil. Yet I must warn us with God's Word in Proverbs 23:29-32. We read, "Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaining? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who tarry long over wine; those who go to try mixed wine. 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." Why did Jesus do this miracle? Was it to show honor to this home? It did. Was it to honor the bond of marriage? It did. Was it to help a couple on their wedding day not to be ashamed? It did. The main reason was, in verse 11, to manifest Jesus' glory so that others would believe, and they did.

This sign and miracle pointed away from itself, from the water turning into wine to the One whose Word changed it. How many of us resemble empty stone jars? Do we have legalistic hard hearts, due to disappointments and unforgiveness. These stone jars were for fulfilling the prescribed law to wash well before eating. Jesus didn't only change water into wine, but He transformed ceremonial washing jars into more than instruments to carry out the law, so they became the source of joy, as He replaced the water of legalism with the wine of grace. Is God transforming you? He will turn your fears into faith, your pain into purpose, your roadblocks into His rest, your trials into a testimony, your barrenness into His bounty, your weakness into His strength, and your disappointments into dependence upon Him. Have you run out of wine? Jesus' glory and grace is to turn our water into wine.