

**John 2: 1-11; “The Beginning of Miracles”, Sermon # 9 in the series –
“That all May Honor the Son”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall
on February 10th, 2013, in the Morning Worship Service.**

When it says, “On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee”, it means three days after the events which had just transpired. Jesus had just called the first six of his twelve disciples and had related to one of them, Nathanael, that he was an Israelite without guile. Nathanael had said to Jesus, “How do you know me?” And Jesus told him that He saw him under the fig tree having his secret and private devotions. Nathanael then immediately knew that because of Jesus’ omniscience, His ability to see everything in his heart, that He was indeed the promised Messiah, the Son of God and the King of Israel. Jesus then said to him, “Because I said to you, I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe?” “You will see greater things than these.” The beginning of these “greater things” took place on this occasion.

It was the beginning of Christ’s doing miracles; it was the “beginning of signs” which He did which manifested His glory. The glory of Jesus Christ is now very manifest to those who are in the heavenly places. He has been given by the Father all power in heaven and earth. But while He walked here upon the earth His glory was veiled. That is, people could see that there was something very great and good about Jesus, but it was only confirmed to them that He was the Son of God when they the miracles that He did.

This is what we want to take a closer look at this morning. Jesus’ doing miracles was the manifestation of His glory; that is, they manifested the excellence of His power and glory that He was, and is, able to save people from their sins. We want to look first at the manifestation of Christ’s glory in meeting the particular needs of people. 2ndly - We want to look at the manifestation of Christ’s glory in His ability to take what is common and change it into what is delightful. And 3rd – We want to look at the manifestation of Christ’s glory in saving the best for last.

1st – We want to look at the manifestation of Christ’s glory in meeting the particular needs of people. (verses 1-5)

Here we find the Lord Jesus attending a wedding in Cana of Galilee with His disciples and His mother. Evidently, one of these persons being married was a relative of Mary’s, for when they ran out of wine at this wedding feast, she immediately thinks that she must do something about it. Her husband Joseph must have already died some time before this, and so Mary cannot ask him to do something to help. But Jesus was there, and so having received such great prophetic promises about Him, even from before the time when He was born, she had great expectations of what He might do in this particular situation. Her relatives had a need for more wine.

It was an embarrassing situation for them to be in. Perhaps the family of those who were being wed did not have enough money to continue to supply all the guests with more wine. She turns to Jesus and she says to Him, "They have no wine." Let us think for a moment about what she was expecting Him to do. She had probably seen Him be baptized by John, and she knew that His public ministry was now beginning. The evidence was His calling His disciples. She remembered the prophecy given to her by the angel before He was born. "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God." "And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus." "He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David." "And He will reign over the house of His father David." Mary probably reasoned to herself this way: If Jesus is going to be King over Israel someday, then surely He can do something miraculously now, for me, and for the guests at this wedding. I will use my motherly influence, knowing that Jesus has always honored me as His mother, and I will hope that He will perform a miracle.

Now Mary must be commended for her piety and her good intentions here. She saw the need and she immediately believed that Jesus could miraculously do something about it. This is what you and I should also believe, when we see needs arise in relation to the various situations of people around us. We should immediately refer them to Jesus, our great and glorious Savior and Lord. Surely He can do something about it. He most certainly is the One whom we should take all of our cares and concerns to. Knowing, therefore, that Jesus not only does not mind that we bring all of our cares and concerns to Him, that He actually would have us do this in regard to all the various situations of need that people have around us, we are somewhat surprised here when we find Jesus saying to her, "Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me?" "My hour has not yet come."

What does He mean by this? I believe that He means this. He means that in regard to the ministry which He had been called to by His Father, to teach and preach the truth of the gospel, and in order to live a righteous life perfectly keeping the commandments of God, He would always be righteously considering the true needs of the people around Him at all times. But, any miracles that He would do would only be done at His Father's bidding, according to His Father's will and purpose, and not because she as His mother was asking Him to do this. All the miracles that He would do would indeed be done to meet a particular physical need of a person or persons, for healing or for help to them, for the healing of their physical bodies, or the casting out demons from them, or raising them from the dead. But all would be done according to the will of God His Father, and not because she or others saw the need and therefore thought that He should do something about it, simply because He had the power to do so. No, the will and purpose of the Father came first, during this time of Jesus' earthly ministry.

This is a very important point for all of us to grasp today as well; not simply Mary in that day. This incident of how Jesus replied to His mother has relevance for each of us. Jesus did not do His mighty miracles, His signs, because He felt obliged to do them because people thought that this was what He ought to do. Jesus did not heal people's sick and diseased bodies, or feed them physically, or satisfied them with wine on social occasions like this wedding when the wine ran out, simply because he had the ability as the Son of God to do so. He did all of His sign miracles in complete submission to the greater will and purpose of the Father. He was always doing the Father's will and not His own.

It was in this humble and holy way that His glory would be manifested. Even in the manifestation of His glory, the Lord Jesus was in complete submission to the Father. He did not use His power to do miracles, in one instance, independent of His Father's will. Even His love and respect for His own dear mother would not deter Him from this. But He did these signs so that people might know that He was their promised Messiah, and the Savior of sinners, whether they were Jews or Gentiles.

Three applications must be made. 1st – Christ is still doing miracles today, but they are never arbitrary, neither do they take place simply at the request of men or women, no matter how great or important those people are. It is true that we ought to pray for the physical healing of people. Christ still does miracles of physical healing today. But miracles are done according to God's will and not man's. We also ought to pray for Christ's help and blessing to be given to people in need. Christ is often doing "miracles" of helping meet the needs of people today. I do not mean signs in the sense that we are talking about this morning. But He often shows people mercy through His servants; His dear people. But He always does them with the greater purpose of the Father's will in mind in the matter. The Father has plans which were made long ago in perfect faithfulness. He orders all things after the counsel of His own will. Jesus is the executor of these plans. Truly, He can meet every need, but He will not do it according to the demands of men or women; their reasons which they think that He should feel compelled to do a miracle.

2nd Application – It is not men's temporal or physical needs that are the ultimate reasons that miracles were done by Jesus. But rather it was, that they were done in order that the Father's purpose in sending the Lord Jesus would be more clearly seen. Mary needed to receive this gentle reproof that Jesus gave to her; "Woman, what have I to do with you?" "What does your concern have to do with me? She needed to remember His question to her when he was just a young man: "Why did you seek Me?" "Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business? It says in Luke 2: 50 that neither Joseph nor Mary understood the statement which He spoke to them. But this time she did understand. She understood that it was not her place as His mother to make request for this

miracle; to attempt to stir Him up to do something which might not be in the Father's time for Him to do it. She is meddling with things that she should not.

William Burkitt, the Puritan commentator says: "Christ, who discerned the thoughts of Mary's heart, finds her guilty of presumption; she thought by her motherly authority, she might have expected, if not commanded, a miracle from Him: whereas Christ was subject to her as a man during his private life: but now being entered upon His office as mediator, as God-man, he give her to understand she had no power over him, nor any motherly authority in the business of His public office; therefore He says to her, 'Woman, what have I to do with thee?'" Even so, my brethren, although it is good for you to bring everything to God in prayer, remember in all your requests to add, "If it is your good will Father, may this miraculous or good thing come about". It is not your will, but God's will which is most important.

3rd Application – Can you see here, that if this is the way that Jesus handled this situation with His dear mother, that there is no way that it can be true that Mary is a Mediatrix, a motherly mediator with God the Father, as the Roman Catholics fondly dream. They say, "If Jesus will not hear you, then go to His mother and lay out your requests to her." And she will command Him to have your prayers answered. This is blasphemy indeed. Let them repent of this sinful error of placing the mother of Jesus on the same level with our Lord Jesus Christ. Mary, although she is blessed in the memory of all generations of Christians, was not immaculately conceived. She was a woman; a woman of like nature to all of us. We are still sinners, even though we have been changed by the grace of Christ.

We are sinners who still, on occasion, need to be gently reprov'd, as this particular passage proves. The Lord Jesus is the only mediator between God and men. It is not as though Jesus, in this conversation with His mother, was intending to deny her request for His miraculous help. He was teaching her that she needed to make her request, realizing that all that He would do, must be done in humble submission to the will of Father.

This is what Jesus was teaching her and she immediately learned the lesson. For she says to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do it." She understood that Jesus was not only going to meet the needs of the people at this wedding for wine, but He was meeting her need as well, to behold His glory in the truth that He was teaching her. Therefore, let us also be in complete submission to the will of the Father in regard to all the requests that we make in prayer, bringing them to our Lord Jesus, and through Him, to the Father.

Now 2nd – We want to look at the manifestation of Christ's glory in His ability to take what is common and change it into what is delightful.
(verses 6-9)

"Now there were set there six waterpots of stone, according to the manner of purification of the Jews, containing twenty or thirty gallons apiece." "Jesus said to them, 'Fill the waterpots with water.'" "And they filled them up to the brim." "And

He said to them, ‘Draw some out now, and take it to the master of the feast.’ “And they took it.” “When the master of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom.” Now I want you to notice some things with me, about this miracle. First of you will notice that Jesus did not create something out of nothing. It is not as though Jesus couldn’t have created something out of nothing, but you will notice that in all of Jesus’ sign miracles He always worked with what was before Him, something that was already created, and changed that. With sick people, He laid His hands upon them and healed them. With the demon-possessed He cast the demons out. With the dead that He intended to raise, according to the will of the Father, He brought the spirit back to the lifeless body.

In each case the miracle was a physical representation of what He also does spiritually in the salvation of the soul of the person who knows themselves to be a sinner. The salvation of a sinner is a greater miracle yet, because in doing a work of grace in the heart, the Lord Jesus is giving life to the sin-sick soul in regeneration. He transfers the sinner from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light, and He takes them out from under Satan’s rule. He raises that soul spiritually from the dead, and gives them to eternal life. But in this particular miracle that we are studying, Jesus took the very common element of water, and changed it into wine. This was the beginning of the manifestation of His glory to His disciples, and it says in verse 11, “they believed in Him”.

Now, they had already believed in Jesus, so this was not their conversion to Him. So what is the Apostle John saying to us then? He is saying that Jesus is able to take the common and ordinary experiences of life and by His power working in you and His Spirit’s dwelling in you, He is able to bring His joy to you in every experience of life by His grace. You have only to be His servant and fill up the waterpots of your life with wholesome and spiritually nutritious activities every day, and He will transform the common into the extraordinary. He is able to attend the most special events of your life, like when you get married. And He is able to fill these events not only with joy, but with “joy inexpressible and full of glory”.

And He is able to keep the supply of His grace coming to you so that you have an abundance for every good work, and joy and peace in believing in Him in every situation where you think that you are running low on the resources to glorify Him with your life. Just when you think that you are running out of resources to minister to other people around you, He will make it even more apparent what you should do as His disciple because He performs the miracle of changing the water into wine. You only have to fill your waterpots to the brim, and He will take everything that you pour into your ministry to others around you, and change it from the ordinary to the extraordinary. That was the beginning of miracles for Jesus as He entered in to His public ministry.

But notice that He had told Mary that His time was not yet. If His time was not yet, in terms of doing public miracles, He was still well able to very calmly, very deliberately, and very quietly perform this sign. There were no words spoken; there were no gestures made, or hands laid upon anyone. No one would see this great transformation take place, but Jesus would simply will the water in those large water pots to become wine. He would then instruct the servants to draw some of it out, and take it to the master of the feast. You and I are servants of Christ. You and I and all believers are the ones who are entertaining the guests; those who have been given the gospel invitation to come to this wedding feast which represents salvation from sin and eternal life.

We are Christ's close relatives; His brothers and sisters which make up His spiritual Bride. Christ is able to take what is common in life and make it delightful. He is able to take what is special and make it extraordinary, by His mighty grace. His love is better than wine, but it is pictured very well by the finest wine. Jesus is able to do miracles when no one is able to perceive it; miracles behind the scenes. He is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we can ask or think. And what He expects of us, who are His servants, is to take some of our spiritual experience of Him, what He has done for us in changing us by His grace, and bring it to those who have been invited to this wedding.

It is here in the church where needy sinners and saints may find refreshment for their souls. Let them taste of this wine, and let them believe and be saved. Let His people be refreshed. Their drinking of the cup of this spiritual wine will mean their partaking of the extraordinary joy of sins forgiven, and a new life in Christ; a life of being transformed from one degree of glory to another, even by His Spirit. "Ho!" "Everyone who thirsts, come to the water; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat." "Yes, come buy wine and milk without money and without price." "Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy?" "Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in abundance." "Incline your ear, and come to Me," says the Lord Jesus. "Hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you—the sure mercies of David." (Isaiah 55: 1-3)

This wine is for sinners and for saints as well. Both need to be changed and transformed. The sinner needs to have a new heart, and the saint needs their heart strengthened day by day. Whichever you are, you may think that somehow the delight and enjoyment of life has run out for you, because you have seen how far short you fall in keeping the commandments of the Lord. But salvation is not based on your keeping the commandments of God's law. It is all of grace. If you trust in Jesus you are justified in the sight of God. You are declared righteous in His sight. But there is so much more that goes together with this blessed truth.

Justification is God's continual acceptance and favor toward you because you have received Christ's righteousness as your righteousness. It is the umbrella over all of your sanctification so that you will have joy in living your life of following

Christ. If you will taste of the wine of the joy that these verses tell you about, then you shall have joy and delight in believing in Jesus as you go about to keep His commandments every day. It will be far more than just a cup of cold water given to you in His name. It will be the means of your being lifted up out of the sin of unbelief which you may have fallen into, so that you are continually joying and rejoicing in the love of Christ Jesus to you. That is what Christ intends by this sign.

And then 3rd – We want to look at the manifestation of Christ’s glory in saving the best for last. (verses 9-11)

“When the master of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom.” “And he said to him, ‘Every man at the beginning sets out the good wine, and when the guests have well drunk, then the inferior.’” “You have kept the good wine until now!” I interpret this saying of the master of the feast as his telling the bridegroom in effect, “You have saved the best for last!” The outcome of Jesus’ turning the water into wine is like a parable in itself here. It is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. And we who are Christians need to learn the its lesson.

Will you not remember, dear Christian, that Christ in His giving you of His grace, does not merely intend to meet the bare necessities of your spiritual life; He wants you to be able to delight yourself in Him, and what He is doing for you every day. He wants you to see that He is the one who keeps on giving you grace upon grace in teaching you the many spiritual truths of how you can become strong as a Christian, and then He is the One who is providentially ordering the circumstances in your life so that you will practically learn the lessons of what it means to be a Christian. It was no accident that they ran out of wine that day of the wedding. Probably they didn’t plan on so many guests, or how much would be consumed. All the wine that they had brought ran out. But when Jesus did the miracle they had 6 large water pots full of it, and it tasted better than the stuff that they had brought. Thus, the last was better than the first.

So it is in living the Christian life; the best is saved for the last. You know, someday all the joys and pleasures of this world, that the ungodly people of this world have pursued, will come to an end and pass away. And when a person lives their life without Christ, it can hardly be expected that their earthly joys will become greater. But the person who believes in Jesus has tasted of the Lord’s goodness and knows that the best is yet to come. Even in this life, the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn which shines brighter and brighter until the full day. Christ, as the heavenly Bridegroom has purposely kept the best until last.

Listen to William Burkitt the Puritan Commentator. “It was fitting that Christ’s miraculous wine should be more perfect than the natural.” “But, O blessed Savior, how delicate and delicious shall that wine be, which we shall drink ere long, with Thee in Thy Father’s kingdom!” “Let the Holy Spirit fill the vessel of

my heart with water, with godly sorrow and contrition, and thou wilt turn it into wine.” “For blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.” I would only add, that you have no reason to wait to enjoy Christ’s turning the common things of your life into wine by His grace. You may begin right now; even at this hour. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. Continue to believe and do whatever He says to you, and you shall drink of the finest of the wine; His great ability to turn the common things of life into delightful things, and the special events of life into something extraordinary.