

Jesus Turns Water into Wine

John 2

The Life and Teaching of Christ

Warm up Question: Did you ever get blamed for something you didn't do? Who placed the blame on you, was it your parents, siblings, or a teacher? Share your story.

¹ 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 in Cana of Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him. (John 2:1-11)

It had not been an easy life for Mary, the mother of Jesus. Let's think about what had happened to her so far and how the birth of Jesus had impacted and changed her whole life. Since Jesus' birth there had been a stigma on her life, a stain on her character that she had lived with, now for around 30 years. In those days, if a woman was found to be an adulteress, she was stoned to death for her punishment. Joseph never accused her publicly for this reason, but it must have been difficult for him to understand. How could Mary be pregnant without knowing a man? Surely this question must have been the subject of hushed conversations among her family and those who knew her well. She had been falsely accused of sex outside of marriage, a grievous sin for a young Jewish girl. Joseph had been told about her miraculous conception by an angel, but she still had

to bear the shame, for without divine revelation, who would have believed such a story? How could she explain, even to her own family, that she was a virgin at the birth of Jesus? How do you think she felt when she heard that every baby boy in Bethlehem less than two years old was murdered by Herod? Don't you think she feared that her son would be killed if it was ever found out that her baby was the promised Messiah? Matthew's gospel records that an angel had warned Joseph about Herod's murderous intent and that he was to take Mary and the baby Jesus to Egypt for a time (Matthew 2:13). When Joseph and Mary went back to Nazareth, they sought to live life in a quiet, normal way, hiding the fact that she was a virgin at the birth of Jesus. It was in Nazareth that Mary was "found to be with child," outside of marriage. We know from the scripture that Joseph, who was espoused to Mary, had an inclination to separate himself from her quietly before the actual marriage ceremony had taken place (Matthew 1:18-21), so that she would not be exposed to public disgrace. After His birth in Bethlehem and subsequent trip to Egypt, Jesus grew up in Nazareth with the stigma that was attached to his mother. It seems that the Pharisees and Jewish leaders who hated him had sent their spies to Nazareth to check out his birth details. In one place they insinuated that he was illegitimate, "We are not illegitimate children, they protested. The only Father we have is God Himself" (John 8:41). In another place when talking to the man born blind who had been healed by Jesus, they had said of Christ, "Give glory to God, they said. We know this man is a sinner." I'm sure Mary longed for the truth to come out about who Jesus really was and for her vindication to be complete. This insinuation by her townsfolk was brought out in the recent movie about Jesus' birth, *The Nativity Story*. When Jesus said his goodbyes to His family in Nazareth on His way to be baptized by John, Mary perhaps felt that at last the time had come. After His baptism His ministry would begin and perhaps at last she would be vindicated by the truth of who He really was.

The occasion was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, the home of Nathanael, a town around 10 miles from Mary

and Jesus' home city of Nazareth. We can assume that because Mary, Jesus, and His disciple's were invited, the wedding was of a close friend or a relative. We have no way of telling when it happened, but Joseph must have died at some time after Jesus' twelfth birthday, the last recorded time he was with Mary and Jesus (Luke 2:41-51). It is very likely that at whatever time Joseph had died, financial responsibility rested on Jesus, as the eldest, to be the breadwinner for the family until His brothers had grown up. We are told that Mary had four sons after Jesus' birth and at least two daughters, and that Jesus was known as the carpenter's son (Matthew 13:54-57). We don't know who was responsible for the catering of the wedding at Cana, but it is logical to assume that Mary felt some level of care and responsibility for she was the one who was told that the wine had run out instead of the master of the banquet. The master of the banquet certainly knew nothing of the problem, as evidenced by his lack of knowledge when the water was changed into wine (Verse 9). The way the stewards looked to Mary for direction is perhaps an indication that the wedding was the occasion of a relative or close friend. Certainly she was giving instruction to the servants when the wine had run out as to what to do about the problem.

Hospitality was, and still is a big thing in the Middle East. In that culture it was the groom that was responsible for the wedding expenses. The family could be sued by the bride's parents if people left the festivities unsatisfied, or thought that the catering was under par. People would drink wine because it was safer to drink than water due to the purifying process it went through; water was more suspect. One never knew what had happened to the water upstream. Wine was essential to a marriage celebration in the Middle East. The Bible says that, "Wine gladdens the heart of man (Psalm 104:15). In the Jewish culture, wine symbolized joy. Rabbi's had a saying: "Without wine, there is no joy." Being drunk was frowned upon however, and often the wine, if strong, was watered down, but wine with dinner and festivities was and is the norm for adults in the Mediterranean region and Middle East. I remember being on a Short Term Mission trip which took us through France, Spain and Portugal, visiting and helping church planters. I visited one pastor in Portugal and while we were eating, I declined wine with the dinner. He told me how alien it was to the culture of the region to not drink wine with dinner. I have observed that often as I have traveled all over the wine growing regions of Spain, Portu-

gal, France, Italy, Yugoslavia, Greece and Israel. Wine is a symbol of joy to be partaken with friends. What a terrible thing had happened in this wedding. It was as if Mary was saying, "Their joy has run out." Life can be like that, it can become a daily grind, a lack of joy in life with nothing to look forward to. 10If the ax is dull and its edge unsharpened, more strength is needed.... (Ecclesiastes 10:10). Our lives get dull through overwork and our energy is drained away when there is little play and no joy. Many people seek for joy by chasing success, but I have never heard of a person saying on their death bed, "I wish I had spent more time at the office." Others go through financial challenges which tempt them to work harder and take less time for the fun things in life that don't cost anything, such as enjoying close relationships with family and friends. (If you don't have family and friends nearby, start a small group!) Open your home to others. Let the joy of the Lord become your strength by living a life which includes the joy of relationships and shared family time:

¹ "Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, **buy wine** and milk without money and without cost (Isaiah 55:1 Emphasis mine).

We are not talking here about literal wine; we are talking about buying the wine of joy without money and without cost. How do we buy it? Not with money. We are to come to the fount of all Living Water, the true Vine (John 15:1), the Lord Jesus Christ, and drink deeply of Him. We can do this by spending time reading His Word, the Bible, and through devoting personal time in prayer. The transaction is made when we pay with our poverty and bankruptcy, giving our all into His hands to receive the full life He promises us. Doesn't that sound like a good trade? You could never find such an excellent trade on the stock market! If we are to be wise about buying and selling in this life, we will realize that it has more to do with what we devote our lives to, exchanging our limited resources for His wealth of unlimited resources. He promises that if we come to the well of Life, we will never be thirsty. He has promised us life in abundance (John 10:10).

Think back to a time when you enjoyed life more. What was it about that time that made it enjoyable? Share with one another your recollections of joy.

The most enjoyable times of my life have been when I

am in close relationship with others and with God. My favorite thing to do in life is to sit around a table over a meal with friends. Times of celebration with friends are among the most memorable times for most people. Going back to our wedding ceremony in Cana, the lack of wine at the wedding was a problem that could have disappointed those at the celebration. It was a dilemma that needed a solution. Mary did something about the problem. She went to Jesus and said, “They have no more wine.”

What do you think Mary was expecting Jesus to do about the problem?

Did Mary know what Jesus would do about this problem? Remember, this was His first miracle, as we are told in verse 11, so we do not know if she expected anything miraculous, only that she was relying on Him in a tight situation, hoping that He would have an answer. Perhaps she was expecting Him to make up a decent excuse to those attending. It’s possible that she was expecting Jesus to give a speech of some sort to get people’s minds off of drinking while the bridegroom went to buy some more wine. Although this was His first miraculous sign, the Scriptures indicate that Jesus’ miraculous power began at His baptism by John the Baptist, when the Spirit came upon Him like a dove. Matthew records that Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit as he returned from the Jordan River baptism (Luke 4:1, 14). Up until this point however, Mary had no idea what Jesus was capable of. She had never witnessed Him move in the miraculous up to this point, from what the Scriptures tell us. Remember that when Jesus, after His baptism, came to His hometown of Nazareth and preached and healed the sick, the people responded with surprise, saying; “Where did this man get these things? ...What’s this wisdom that has been given him, that He even does miracles?” (Mark 6:2). Their testimony was that all the time He had been living among them, they had never heard of Him doing any miracles. We must remember that to the people in Jesus’ hometown He was still just the carpenter’s son. However, Mary had always cherished His true identity in her heart, knowing that He was the Messiah. Perhaps at this wedding she wondered if it was finally time for this fact to become apparent to others. Mary was confident that Jesus was more than capable of fixing the problem. In responding to Mary, however, Jesus’ answer at first seems to be negative; “Dear woman, why do you involve me?” Jesus replied, “My time has not yet come”(Verse 4).

What did He mean by the phrase, “My time has not yet come”?

He did not come to seek His own glory but the glory of the Father, and that chief act of glory was to give up His own life for the redemption of man. Jesus was focused on His mission. He knew that as soon as attention was drawn to Him, there would be a limited amount of time to accomplish His ministry. He also knew that He would draw the attention of the religious leaders, and what their reaction would be. Jesus knew that His mission would end with the sacrifice of His life, and that there was a time for this to happen. There was only one way that man could be bought back from slavery to sin, by the death of a substitute in man’s place. This substitute could not be a man:

⁷ No man can redeem the life of another or give to God a ransom for him- ⁸ the ransom for a life is costly, no payment is ever enough- ⁹ that he should live on forever and not see decay (Psalm 49:7-9).

Salvation can only be won by God alone. The ransom payment could not be paid by a normal man. God stepped in and became man that the Father alone would be glorified. Real joy can only be restored by coming into right relationship with God through Jesus Christ. He has opened the way of salvation to us by His payment of the just punishment for sin—death! All that Jesus had accomplished in His teachings and works of miracles led up to this point, His ultimate sacrifice. When Palm Sunday came, just a few days before His crucifixion, a party of Greeks came to see Jesus. Jesus told them that His time had come:

²³ Jesus replied, “**The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.** ²⁴ I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. ²⁵ The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶ Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me. ²⁷ “Now my heart is troubled, and **what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour.** ²⁸ Father, glorify your name!” (John 12:23-28 Emphasis mine).

Jesus was telling them that He had come for this express

reason—to die in place of guilty man, you and me. God is most glorified by us “falling into the ground and dying to ourselves”. This means picking up our cross and following Him. If we die to ourselves, there will be a harvest of many seeds. What happens to a seed when it is buried in the ground? The outer husk breaks open and the life that is within the seed starts to be made manifest and grow. Jesus’ hour had come and He obediently gave His life, so that the ransom price for our sin could be met by Him (John 7:30; 8:20; 13:1; 17:1).

Who do you turn to when you have a problem?

Some turn to Mr. Visa or Mr. Master Card. Others turn to their own intellect, or their own strength and natural abilities. There are also those that would look to Mary for help, but what was Mary’s only instruction ever recorded? “Do whatever He tells you” (Verse 5). According to Mary’s words, we should look to the Lord and search for His mind on each and every problem we encounter.

Jesus saw six stone water jars that were used for ceremonial foot and hand washing. Each one of these jars held 20 to 30 gallons of water. Jesus told the stewards to fill each jar to the brim and then take some of this water to the master of ceremonies. They must have wondered what He was thinking! Why would they serve the guests water which they were meant to wash with? Imagine the surprise of each steward who had bucketed water from the stream to each water pot. When a ladle was dipped in, out came wine, and not just good wine, but exceptional wine! The master of ceremonies was quite surprised at the quality of this wine and was so impressed, that he said to the bridegroom: “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.”

Why do you think Jesus made the wine of such high quality?

Mark testifies that Jesus... “has done everything well” (Mark 7:37). Knowing this, why on earth should He make cheap wine, especially considering the bride and groom would always remember their day and speak of their wedding story the rest of their lives. I like to think that Mary went around with a smile on her face, saying to everyone at the wedding, “That’s my boy!” like a proud Jewish momma. Don’t you think that Mary went

home feeling vindicated and proud of her son that day? The Scripture says that He revealed His glory and that His disciples put their trust in Him with this first of His miraculous signs.

Jesus Clears the Temple

¹² After this he went down to Capernaum with his mother and brothers and his disciples. There they stayed for a few days. ¹³ When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ In the temple courts he found men selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. ¹⁵ So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. ¹⁶ To those who sold doves he said, “Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father’s house into a market?” ¹⁷ His disciples remembered that it is written: “Zeal for your house will consume me.” ¹⁸ Then the Jews demanded of him, “What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?” ¹⁹ Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.” ²⁰ The Jews replied, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?” ²¹ But the temple he had spoken of was his body. ²² After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken. ²³ Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many people saw the miraculous signs he was doing and believed in his name. ²⁴ But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all men. ²⁵ He did not need man’s testimony about man, for he knew what was in a man (John 2:12-25).

What things stand out to you from this passage?

It was the once a year celebration of Passover. Josephus, the Jewish historian, stated that as many as 2½ million visitors would throng Jerusalem during this solemn time of remembering Israel’s departure from Egypt under the leadership of Moses. Imagine that you were one of the many pilgrims who had saved your money for years to visit the God of Israel at His Temple in Jerusalem. People would travel by road and by ship for many weeks to go to this awesome building built by King Herod on top of Mount Moriah, the place where Abraham was tested when he was asked to offer up his son Isaac. As one of those pilgrims, you would be longing to experience the presence of God and enjoy the quietude to pray and experience His peace. Just to meditate on the history of the place would bring awe. King David and his son, Solomon, Hezekiah, and Ne-

hemiah, had all lived here and actually walked where men were now walking. Generations upon generations have visited this Holy site. I have been up to the Temple Mount several times and have felt awe as I looked at the ancient stones on the retaining wall which date back to Solomon's Temple and weigh somewhere in the region of 200 tons. It is an awesome sight, awesome in the true meaning of the word. As one climbs the stairs up to the Temple Mount itself, the presence of God Himself seems to linger, even though the Temple itself is no longer there, and the Moslem Dome of the Rock stands in its place. As Jesus walked that day into the Court of the Gentiles of the Temple, His heart sank as He looked at what was going on. The whole Court of the Gentiles had been taken over by money changers and merchants, hired by Annas, and Caiaphas, the High Priest of that time. If you were a Gentile (Non-Jew) this Court was the closest place you could get to the Temple Mount where one could experience the presence of God. The Gentile could advance no closer. Jesus was angry when He saw birds and animals being bought and sold at exorbitant prices to line the pockets of Annas and Caiaphas. The Temple Mount was being commercialized, being turned into a marketplace! Those that were poor, who had brought an unblemished lamb to sacrifice at Passover, had their lambs inspected and refused for no reason other than the fact that Annas wanted only his animals to be sacrificed. This meant that they would have to buy animals there at the Temple mount. Annas and Caiaphas had quite a money making operation going on in place of what should have been an act of worship. An animal bought inside the Temple Court would cost 15 times more than an animal bought outside. Annas presided over everything that was going on and was responsible for this system of purchase and trade which exploited the poor. The Temple tax also had to be paid. Visitors from different nations would often be short changed. It was an unfair and dishonest practice. It would have saddened any true worshipper who understood how people were being treated in the Name of God. As Jesus approached the Temple Mount, it was confrontation time! One person, Jesus, stood against the High Priest and his family and other corrupt officials who were overseeing this money making scheme which offended the heart of God.

His passion for His Father's Name and glory burst forth in controlled anger. Jesus was outraged at their insolence and greed. Just picture the scene! The money rolling everywhere, people scrambling for all they could

grab, as tables were being overturned, doves flying in all directions, being set free instead of being used for dishonest profit. The picture is one of bedlam inside the Court of the Gentiles. Can you imagine the outrage of the Jewish officials being challenged by someone whom they believed to be an illegitimate son from Nazareth? Their thoughts may have turned towards violence as they considered the One who challenged their practices. Where did He get His authority to act in this way? They may have thought: "How can He assume to tell us we cannot sell our goods in the Temple precincts?" Surely Jesus must have known that His behavior would not earn him any friends or favors in the Temple Courts. His brave actions exemplified His passion and fervor for His Father's house. Again, we see that He is singular in His mission to glorify the Father.

Religion is highly marketed today. How do you feel about the things of God being turned into great profit? What danger do you see coming from this type of practice?

Jesus demonstrated a love and concern for the poor, the helpless, or those who were ostracized from society. Do we, as Christ's representatives, give the same consideration to these people? Sadly, we are often influenced more by the culture around us than the Christ within us. We do not always see the injustice being done or the opportunities that we have to meet needs right in front of our eyes. Those in Jesus' day may not have noticed the injustice being done in the Temple. We can become desensitized to sin when we live in the midst of it. When God arrives in a situation however, He brings to light those things which have been done in secret. Some of those things may have become accepted and tolerated, but there will come a day when He will tolerate them no longer. The Scriptures say that judgment must begin at the house of God (1 Peter 4:17). He is a defender of those who are vulnerable. When the Day of the Lord comes, He will bring justice with Him.

What things of God are you zealous to protect and defend? What things do you think Jesus would change about the Western church as we know it, if He were suddenly to appear on the scene as He did in this passage?

When the Jews demanded a sign from Jesus to prove His authority to cast out all the money changers and animal sellers, he responded by saying, "Destroy this temple,

and I will raise it again in three days.” Of course, He was no longer talking of the Temple but about His own body, the temple of the Holy Spirit. We are the same temple of the Holy Spirit. Paul, the apostle, in his first letter to the Corinthians said:

¹⁹ Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; ²⁰ you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

The Holy Spirit wants to banish from His temple everything that corrupts and inhibits the peace within a man’s life. Today might be a good day to invite the Lord Jesus to come to your temple afresh by His Spirit and cast out whatever displeases Him. We may not even be

aware of what offends the Lord if it is something to which we are desensitized. One of the tasks of the Holy Spirit is to enlighten us to those areas that God would want to change. Take the time to consider what things God would cleanse from your life in order to bring you greater spiritual freedom.

Prayer: Father, I can think of no other mission in life which is greater than to be involved in what You are doing. Thank You for including me in Your purposes, and for providing the way for me to draw near to You. If there is anything in my life that grieves You, reveal it to me now. I want to relinquish the things that hold me back from accomplishing what You have prepared for me to do. Thank You for the strength and the joy You give me as I choose to follow You.