

Sermon Title: 2018.05.27 — The First Sign

Theme: Jesus is both the real Master of the Banquet, and our true bridegroom who comes to pour out his blood so we can enjoy the wedding feast of the lamb and eternal joy with God.

Scripture: John 2: 1-11

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 "Woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My hour 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 What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

Teaching Outline

I. Introduction

- A. Last week Bret discussed the Great Commission Jesus gave his disciples before His ascension. The disciples remained faithful and **turned the world upside down**.
- B. Today we're looking at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, **the inaugural event**.

II. Not just a miracle, a miraculous sign

- A. **Reynolds Price**, author of *The Three Gospels*, says this actually happened because no writer would create a miraculous solution to a mere social embarrassment as the first, inaugural sign, unless it really happened.
 - 1. *"The Gospel of John is either a work of **madness**, or a work of **blinding light**."*
 - 2. *"Despite the symbolic meanings deduced by two millennia of commentators, it seems unlikely that John would describe such a homely feat unless he had been present and convinced of its actual and inexplicable occurrence. If not, why invent — for the inaugural sign of Jesus' great career — **a miraculous solution to a mere social oversight?**"*

3. The first sign of any great leader should be a **big deal**, pointing to what he stands for and what his aims are.

B. **Why this miracle** as the first sign? What's Jesus telling us about who He is and what He wants us to learn about His movement?

III. The cultural context for the wedding in Cana.

A. Differences between weddings then and now

1. Weddings were less about the happiness of individuals and more about the health and welfare of **communities and families**.
2. Weddings were the biggest **social events** in the community.
3. Weddings in 1st century Israel lasted **longer**.
4. Unlike today, the bridegrooms were responsible for the weddings — **providing** the food, drink, and other arrangements.

B. When they ran out of wine, it was an embarrassment, **not a crisis**.

IV. What does this miraculous sign reveal about who Jesus came to be?

A. The **Master of the Banquet** was the person who kept the party moving. Made sure there were toasts, jokes, and funny stories. Jesus saves the Master of the Banquet from the party becoming a huge flop. Jesus shows that He is the real Master of the Banquet, and true Lord of the feast.

B. **People who say Christianity is no fun** have no idea who Jesus really is. He comes to bring festivity and celebration.

C. Jesus reveals Himself as the **true bridegroom** that all of Judaism was waiting for.

D. Tim Keller illustrates what the bridegroom metaphor means.

V. What He Came to Do (**John 2:4-5**)

A. In **Verse 4** He calls His mother, "*Woman*."

B. Then we see the **Crux Interpretum** when He asks, "*why do you involve me?*" People mostly agree on the translation, but not the meaning of the words. Among the many possible explanations put forward here are three.

1. **He's challenging** His mother, asking if she is really committed to His declaring His identity. But that cat is out of the bag following His baptism, the pronouncements of John the Baptism and the selection of His first disciples.
2. **She's challenging** Jesus to finally declare Himself and launch His ministry. But does a mother urge her son on a course she knows will end in His death?
3. **Jesus is warning** His mother that His miracles are not at her disposal. And yet Jesus immediately turns and performs the miracle she seems to be asking for

C. Jesus is thinking about something else all together. As the true bridegroom discussed in Scripture, He might well be thinking of **His own wedding** and the price He would have to pay to bring wine to that wedding.

1. **R.V. Tasker**, the great commentator on John says, "*In performing this sign ... the thoughts of Jesus were turned to the goal towards which His earthly life was inevitably moving.*" He goes on, "*Without in the least reproving her, He indicates*

- that His concern is very different from hers, so different that neither she nor any other human being can share it.”*
2. **Tim Keller**, the great preacher, says, *“Jesus is thinking about his wedding day...the consummation of all consummations. The ultimate union, the ultimate embrace, the wedding feast to end all wedding feasts. But that can’t be all. He is also thinking of what it will require to bring His Bride to Himself--He must drink the cup of the curse so we might drink the cup of blessing.”*
- E. Jesus says, *“Woman, why do you involve me?”* Then, in **verse 4**, Jesus says, *“My hour has not come.”*
1. **My hour** has a specific meaning in John, but is mentioned in a number of other places as well.
 - b. **In John 7:30**, *“So they sought to arrest Him; but no one laid hands on him, because his hour had not yet come.”*
 - c. **In John 12:23-24**, *“Jesus replied, ‘The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 24 Very truly I tell you, 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.’”*
 4. Jesus is talking about the **hour of his death**.
 5. He’s looking into a future at something for which **this wedding is only a parable**, an example.
 6. Jesus’ **agony** over the hour: Luke Chapter 22 Verse 44; *“And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.”*
 7. You can’t really know the love and sacrifice of Jesus unless you understand what He was thinking about — **judgement and hell**. **Matthew 10:28** *Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.”*
 - a. He’s saying you shouldn’t worry about death, you should worry about being rejected, cut off from God. That’s hell.
 - b. He’s saying hell is what He has to experience to provide wine for His wedding feast.
 - c. The relationship of Jesus to the Father was infinitely greater, so His hell would also be infinitely greater than anything we can imagine.
- F. The ceremonial Jars
1. 6 ceremonial water jars holding 20 to 30 gallons each, in all Jesus made 150 gallons of the finest wine.
 2. Why use ceremonial water jars? The custom of the Jews was to use the water jars to signify the impurity of worshippers.
 3. **John Piper** says that what Jesus was saying, by using the ceremonial jars, was this, *“I will take the purification rituals of Israel and replace them with a decisively new way of purification — an acted out parable — of how my own death, my own blood, my hour—will be the final, decisive, ultimate purification for sins.”*

VI. How do we receive Jesus?

- A. **Complete reception** from the bridegroom — When He calls Himself the bridegroom, what's He saying about us, His bride? His total love for the bride.
- B. **Two things** you have to do to receive the promises of Jesus.
 1. Admit you're empty, you've failed, you've blown it, and you bring nothing to your own salvation.
 2. Like the poorly organized bridegroom in this wedding, take the credit for His work in your place.

VII. The Disciples Believed

- A. **Isaiah 25:9.** *"In that day they will say, 'Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the Lord, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation.'"*
- B. **John 2: 11.** What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him."
- C. They knew what God had promised, what all of Judaism had been waiting for. And they saw it here in a miraculous solution to a social blunder.

VII. Application

- A. **Realize your flaws** as a mother, father, boss, student, whatever aren't unusual. The wine runs out. Or maybe you've finally realized the enjoyment you've always sought isn't as meaningful and fulfilling as you'd thought it would be. Maybe you wasted the wine you were given. Take heart, and know that Jesus Christ is the One who provides. We cannot provide the wine that will satisfy, only Jesus can do that. He's our perfect bridegroom.
- B. **You can go to Him with little things.** The wine at a party, or an ax head for a worker, are significant to God. Christianity is a faith that says what is insignificant in this world is glorified with meaning in another world, the world that really matters. Go to him with little things.
- C. **Submit to His commands.** Learn from Mary and the servants. Even when things don't make sense, do whatever He says. You won't receive the blessing if you don't do whatever He says.
- D. **Don't lose sight of the ultimate goal.** The perfect marriage awaits you. You won't be the perfect husband, until you're the perfect bride. And likewise for being the perfect wife. But that's not going to happen in this life. So don't hold your spouse up to Jesus Christ, the perfect bridegroom, and look for fault. You'll find plenty. And you'll be disappointed. If you're not married, but you very much want to be, remember that the marriage of the Lamb will be like no marriage ever in history. Whether married and unhappy, or single and unhappy, remember that the perfect marriage awaits you.
- E. **Notice His work in your life, and use it to grow your faith.** Jesus showed His glory quietly, without a lot of fanfare. No noise. No announcement. He just acts. But the disciples who saw His glory, they believed. Their faith grew. Their trust grew. And so can your's every day, but every day you have to notice the things He's doing in your life and in the lives of those around you.

VIII. We end as we began, with a quote from Reynolds Price from his book, *The Three Gospels*. "John clearly states what all mankind craves to hear, and it is good news. The maker of all loves me, and wants to be with me for all of eternity."

Prayer and Communion