

*1 On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. 2 Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples. 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 this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come." 5 His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."*

*6 Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. 7 Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. 8 And he said to them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast." So they took it. 9 When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom 10 and said to him, "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." 11 This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.*

I'm going to say this a lot as we work our way through the gospel of John. There is one really big idea that John wanted to get across and it is found near the end of his book. John 20:30-31.

*30 Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 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.*

In this story, Jesus performed his first sign. John uses the word "sign" where the other gospel writers say miracles. They mean the same thing but by using the word sign, John is indicating their fundamental purpose: *that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.* Tell me. What else is there? What do you want instead of this? Do you want a happy family? Do you want a decent retirement account? Do you want that \$1.3 billion Powerball payout? (Please don't do that. It's gambling, it's dumb, it's bond

up in endless greed and coveting.) Do you want good health so you can live for a while longer? There are all kind of things we may want or feel that we need. Many of them are idols of our hearts but many are good things as well. But none of them—absolutely none of them are anything compared to John’s main goal. *that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.* This is the most important truth, the most important event that could ever happen to you.

But you say, “I’m already saved, so why should this interest me? I already believe and have this eternal life.” Good, I hope every last person in this room has this life in Christ. But this purpose statement tells us two really important things. One, this gospel is meant for evangelism. That’s why John wrote it. So if it’s purpose is for evangelism, that we need to understand this book and use it for its intended purpose. Agreed? And second, as we understand it more and more, it will help us continue to believe. Let’s face it. Even though many of us grow in our faith over the years, sometimes it feels as if we are just one tragedy away from throwing it all out the window. For some, that could mean walking away from the faith but most it would mean marginalizing your faith. Yes, you believe in Jesus but that’s about it. You don’t have life in his name. He exists for your comfort but you do not exist for him.

So this will be a recurrent theme as we study through the gospel of John, but for today, we have Jesus first sign at the wedding in Cana. It was, as I have titled the message, a sign of glory—of God’s glory, of God’s miraculous, amazing glory.

The first thing that was happening here if almost behind the scenes is that:

### **1. Jesus began to gather his disciples.**

Jesus and his disciples—notice that John calls them “his” disciple and not just “the” disciples—Jesus and his disciples were invited to this wedding feast. And the amazing thing is that this was just a few days after these men even met Jesus. Jesus met Andrew, Peter and John. The next day he met Philip and Nathanael. Now just a few days later we see all of them at the wedding. We are not told who was all there but it is a good guess that these five men were present.

Remember also from last week that even the disciples encountered Jesus gradually. They were following Jesus and John calls them disciples, which just means a learner. But they were not yet chosen by Jesus and the twelve apostles. That was still many months away. But we can see that the disciples were already following Jesus and doing real life with him. And there’s nothing more real in life than a wedding feast. And there’s no one in this room who can relate more than the Boisen family being that a mere eight day ago they had the fifth wedding celebration in their family.

### **2. Jesus validated a wedding celebration.**

The first thing Mary said to her son was “They have no wine.” Maybe she gave him a kiss and traditional Jewish greeting first, we don’t know, but this was her top priority. Mary obviously had a key role in the details of the celebration. She was either responsible for this detail or at least took it upon herself to help the young couple avoid the embarrassment of running out of wine.

Imagine the most expensive, elaborate wedding reception you have ever seen and it would still not be like the one described here. In this culture, what we call the reception would last at least two full days and would often last as long as a week. We just don't have any categories for such a celebration. It's hard enough to plan and prepare for a reception that lasts for a few hours. Can you imagine preparing for several days' worth? The big problem was that they ran out of wine. That would have been terribly embarrassing for the groom, so Mary stepped in to lend a hand.

There's one side question that needs to be answered before we go further. Was this really wine or was it grape juice? The answer may be terribly obvious but since some still claim that it would have been morally impossible for Jesus to have created actual wine, we need to at least address the issue.

First of all, the word for wine in the Greek language is guess what? That's right, the word means wine. But more important is what the master of the feast says in verse 10. *"Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine.* Here is how that is translated in other versions.

KJV            "drunk full"  
NIV            "had too much to drink"

I think the NIV has it exactly right because however you translate the phrase, in the original it was just one word and it meant "to make drunk, to intoxicate."<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the master of the feast noted that at least some people routinely got drunk on the wine at wedding feasts.

However, this may well have been wine that was highly diluted with water. D.A. Carson describes that "wine in the ancient world was diluted with water to between one-third and one-tenth of its fermented strength, i.e. something less strong than American beer. Undiluted wine, about the strength of wine today, was viewed as 'strong drink' and earned much more disapprobation."<sup>2</sup>

I have high regard for Dr. Carson and have often heard this point about diluting wine. I have read quite a bit over the years about wine in ancient cultures of the Bible. Honestly, I am not 100% certain if they routinely diluted the wine or not. My mind is still not made up. However, as always, we need to rely on the text before us and the text tells us clearly that some people were getting drunk from the wine. So it does not matter whether they were drinking smaller amounts of undiluted wine or large amounts of diluted wine, the result was the same. Some of the guests were getting drunk by drinking wine at the wedding. So we can know for certain that this was NOT grape juice!

We'll get to the theological reasons for providing wine in a bit, but in a practical sense, let me make it clear that Jesus was obviously not endorsing drunkenness. That is an absurd and evil thought. But Jesus was validating the importance of this wedding celebration. He gave a miraculous sign that was meant to lead to belief in his deity but in so doing, he also alleviated an embarrassing situation. In other words, this was a Godly miracle but it was also filled with human compassion.

All of Jesus miracles were this way. John tells us that this was the first sign that Jesus did. Most people count eight signs in the gospel of John<sup>3</sup> and they all are very personal in nature.

1—changing water to wine (ch. 2) *This, the first of his signs, Jesus did*

2—healing the official's son (ch. 4) *This was now the second sign Jesus did*

3—healing paralyzed man (ch. 5)

4—feeding the 5,000 (ch. 6) *people saw the sign he had done*

5—walking on water (ch. 6) *“When the Christ appears, will he do more signs than this man has done?”*

6—healed a man blind from birth (ch. 9) *How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?*

7—raising Lazarus from the dead (ch. 11) *What are we to do? For this man performs many signs.*

8—multiplication of fish (*ch. 21*)

Through this miracle in Cana we see the personal touch of compassion at a wedding feast. Also, there are several deeper theological meanings by what Jesus did at this wedding.

**a. Wine represents a blessing.**

Genesis 14:18—*And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; now he was a priest of God Most High.*

Gen 27:28—*Now may God give you of the dew of heaven, And of the fatness of the earth, And an abundance of grain and new wine;*

Joel 2:18—*Then the LORD will be zealous for His land And will have pity on His people. The LORD will answer and say to His people, "Behold, I am going to send you grain, new wine and oil, And you will be satisfied in full with them;*

**b. Jesus is the true bridegroom who will provide wine without end.**

John 3:29—*The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete.*

Isaiah 55:1

*Come, everyone who thirsts,*

*come to the waters;*

*and he who has no money,*

*come, buy and eat!*

*Come, buy wine and milk*

*without money and without price.*

**c. Jesus as the fulfillment of Old Covenant purity laws.** The stone jars were used for ceremonial washing and by using them, Jesus was demonstrating that the old Covenant of ritual purification was being replaced by washing and renewal by the Holy Spirit—being “born again.”

**3. Jesus broke away from his mother.**

When Mary asked for his help, Jesus replied, *Woman, what does this have to do with me?* “Woman,” that does not sound very endearing to our ears, does it? Once in a great while I will use this word in a teasing way when I talk to Karen, as in, “Woman, make me a sammich!” But not once have I ever heard her laugh!

This word does not have the same connotation as the way I am using it, but it was nevertheless both impersonal and a mild rebuke. He could have addressed her as “mother” but instead he chose the impersonal woman.

Something similar happened in Mark 3:31-15.

*31 And his mother and his brothers came, and standing outside they sent to him and called him. 32 And a crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, “Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you.” 33 And he answered them, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” 34 And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! 35 For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.”*

Here at the very start of his public ministry Jesus was making a strong statement that even his own mother could not come between him and the will of his Heavenly Father. This would have been a painful moment for Mary. Mary was almost certainly a widow by now and had come to depend very heavily on her son. Mary had four other sons—James, Joseph, Simon and Judas but as the oldest and firstborn, Mary would have leaned most heavily on Jesus. Jesus brought income to the family through his work as a carpenter. Not to mention the fact that as the Son of God, he would have been the perfect son. Had Mary driven a minivan or an SUV around town, what do you think her bumper sticker about Jesus would have said? My son made the Honor Roll? My son created the universe?

But here Jesus made a public statement about his earthly mother versus his Heavenly Father. The same must also be true of you and me. Is your husband or your wife in any way interfering in your relationship with Christ? Do your close friends help or hinder your relationship with Jesus?

#### **4. Jesus hinted of something greater to come.**

Why the rebuke, “My hour has not yet come”? As a reader of the gospel, it looks forward to the future.

John 7:30-- *So they were seeking to arrest him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his hour had not yet come.*

John 8:20-- *These words he spoke in the treasury, as he taught in the temple; but no one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come.*

John 12:23-- *And Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.*

John 13:1-- *Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.*

John 17:1-- *When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you,*

But somehow this response actually answered Mary’s question because she responded with “*Do whatever he tells you.*” How did she know that Jesus was still going to help her? First, think

about what Mary knew about her son. She received a visit from the angel. She experienced the virgin birth. The shepherds and magi brought their worship and their gifts to them. The angel said to Joseph, “he will save his people from their sins.” At his dedication, Simeon prophesied that Jesus would bring salvation for Gentiles and Jews alike. They were warned to flee to Egypt as Herod wanted to kill him.

Mary knew that God had the greatest plan ever for her son. She had waited thirty years for these things to happen. Joseph her husband was dead and Jesus was still a carpenter. But now, all of a sudden, he was baptized by John and he has his own disciples. Even though she was mildly rebuked by Jesus, somehow she had faith in him to do the right thing. His hour had not yet come but the prophecies about him had begun. Mary knew that much and so said, “do whatever he tells you.” Even though he had just rebuked her, she had faith in him to solve this overwhelming problem at the wedding feast.

#### **5. Jesus created wine ex nihilo.**

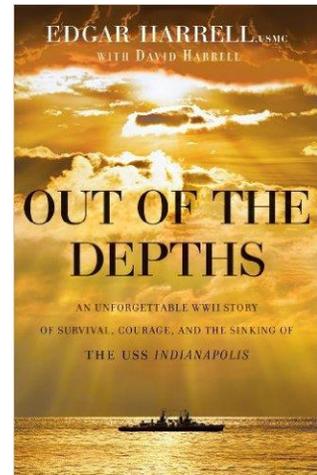
This miracle in chapter two looks back to the opening of the gospel. John 1:3-- *All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made* (John 1:3). Jesus is Creator of all that was. He created the universe ex nihilo—out of nothing. And here at this common wedding feast he did the same with the wine. Now one could argue that he technically did not create out of nothing because he started with water. That misses the point, doesn't it? The water was merely a vehicle for his miracle of creation, just as mud placed on the eyes of the blind was to the blind man. Such things are merely accommodations to the limitations of our human minds and hearts. By creating this wine, Jesus was expressing his deity, his control over all nature, to all who witnessed the miracle.

#### **6. Jesus manifested his glory through a miraculous “sign”.**

John ended this story by telling his readers that Jesus *manifested his glory* through this miraculous sign. First of all, let's think about the very meaning of the word glory. What is GLORY? Psalm 19:1 tells us that “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.” God's glory is not limited by his creation. His glory is much more than his creation but it is not less. His creation screams that there is a sovereign Creator. Billions of people can choose not to believe the message being spoken through creation but that does not change the fact that it still speaks every day for all to hear.

We can also know what glory is by seeing its opposite. Romans 1:22-23 is familiar to us. *Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.* Men and women have always taken Jesus' creation and instead of worshipping the actual Creator, they worship the creation. In so doing, they are rejecting God's glory. God's glory is not diminished by idolatry, except in the hearts of the idolater himself. For those who had eyes to see it, it was a beautiful picture of glory.

If we would only have eyes to see it, we would see his glory all of the time. I just finished reading a second Christmas present, this book titled, *Out of the Depths: An unforgettable WW2 story of survival, courage and the sinking of the USS Indianapolis*. The USS Indianapolis was the fastest battleship in the US Navy but that did not prevent her from being torpedoed by a Japanese submarine. And that was just a few days after they delivered enriched uranium that was put into the 2 atomic bombs that would be dropped on Japan a week later. There were 1200 men on board, 900 entered the water and only 317 were rescued five days later. It was a miracle that they were rescued at all since no one was even looking for them.



Here is a personal testimony from the second pilot to find the survivors.

“Did he find you by chance? The odds against it are one in a million—nay, one in a billion. But somehow he was chosen as the instrument to overcome these impossible, astronomical odds. Wilbur Gwinn looked down at the split second that would become one of the great moments of history.”<sup>4</sup>

And the author and fellow survivor was certain that God has supernaturally guided the rescue.

“But I would hasten to add that my survival, along with that of my comrades, was not the ultimate purpose in such a supernatural event. No, whenever God performs any feat that arouses the awe and wonder of His creation, he does so primarily to bear witness to His own glory. And it is to that end I remain committed, for indeed, such a story has no human explanation. Only a sovereign, omnipotent God could have orchestrated such a scenario, for our good and His glory.”<sup>5</sup>

That is a wonderful summary of the miracle at Cana. Jesus manifested his glory but doing so is always for our good as well.

### **7. Jesus created an opportunity to believe in him.**

Another result of this miracle comes at the last sentence. *And his disciples believed in him.* Jesus displayed his glory but not all believed like the disciples did.

*He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.*

This was a sign that was intended to lead to belief in Jesus as the Messiah. But we know that all such signs are divisive, aren't they? Two people look at the same sign, the same evidence and one believes and the other does not. I assume most of you are sitting in a church this morning because you have chosen to believe. This is the reason that we still need these signs. So that we can continue to believe. This is why we need to daily open the Word of God, so that we can believe. This is why we come to worship services—so we can see Jesus and believe.

**Rich Maurer**  
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<sup>1</sup> All these words are mostly used in the lit. sense. μεθύω, “to be drunk,” Hence μεθύσκω means “to intoxicate,” “to make drunk,” mostly pass. “to get drunk” (The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament)

<sup>2</sup> D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, p. 169.

<sup>3</sup> As John said in chapter 20:30, *Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book*; Jesus did an untold number of miracles throughout his public ministry like the one described in Matthew 9:35—*And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction*. However, for John’s purposes, he chose just these eight, which he called “signs.”

<sup>4</sup> Edgar Harrell, *Out of the Depths: An Unforgettable WW2 Story of Survival, Courage and the Sinking of the USS Indianapolis*, Bethany House Publishers: Minneapolis, © 2005, p. 119.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, pp. 119-120.