

A Miracle in a Marriage

'Family Matters' Series:



On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples. When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine."

John 2.1-3

The Scene...

A village wedding feast... an important occasion lasting several days. After a feast there was an evening wedding and then a long procession to the new couple's home. They would have **paraded** through all the village streets by the light of flaming **torches** and with

a **canopy** over their heads. Everyone would come out to wish them well. For the following week they would keep **open house**. They wore **crowns** and dressed in their **bridal robes**. Barclay: "They were treated like a king and queen, were actually addressed as king and queen, and their word was law." (I was thinking about **Aaron's ordination** last night and thought we ought to have this new tradition where after your ordination for a week you would wear a crown and everyone would obey you. Then we would go back to normal.) In ancient world where life is tough, the week of your wedding was often the **very best week of your life**.

A Marriage With a Special Problem

"the wine ran out"

For a Jewish feast wine was essential. "Without wine," said the Rabbis, **"there is no joy."** Wine lightened the harsh burdens of life. Weddings were places of great celebration, and the moderate consumption of wine was a welcome part of the hospitality. Hospitality itself was a sacred duty; if you ran out of wine or food at a wedding it would be a great humiliation for the bride and the bridegroom.

The wine running out has become **a picture** for me of **many marriages**. It is easy to run out of wine in your marriage. Couples start out with such high hopes. You are in love and excited and off on this adventure, and everyone is behind you... and three years later the baby has kept you up all night and you can't see straight you are so tired and you have spent too much and conversation doesn't come so easy and you haven't had a date night in months and to be honest, you look across the breakfast table and your spouse doesn't look so special anymore... Marriages can run out of wine.

A Marriage With a Special Guest

"Jesus also was invited to the wedding"

That is interesting, because he **wasn't famous** at this time. He hadn't done any miracles, hadn't preached his best sermons yet – and actually had just completed 40 days in the desert after his baptism. But he was invited. It seems that his mother knew this family – she could tell the servants what to do – and perhaps there was a **family connection**. We aren't sure. I think it must have been because **they liked him**. "*Be sure to put Jesus' name on the list*" they must have said. They knew him well enough to know that they liked having him around. Lot's of people invited Jesus to their parties. **He got in trouble** more than once because he went to so many parties! Isn't that interesting!!

So he was invited. When they made out the list of people they wanted there, Mary and Jesus and his disciples were on the list. **They were asked and they came**. Remember that.

So this is a marriage with a **special problem** and a marriage with a **special guest**. And that turned into a special moment.

A Marriage with a Special Moment

Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. And he said to them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast." So they took it.

John 2.6-8

Mary had told the servants to do whatever Jesus told them to do, and now he **told them to fill up these stone water jars** to the brim. The jars were found in many homes, because the Jews had elaborate **washing ceremonies** before and during their meals and when people came into the homes from the dusty roads. So every home had jars like this, and this home had 6 of them, each holding from 20 to thirty gallons. They would have been about chest height and about as round as a basketball.

Jesus asked the servants to fill them up and they did. And then he told them to **take some to the master of the feast**, and they did. And **it was wine**. The water had been turned into wine.

I want to **note several things** about this miracle.

This Was a Great Deal of Wine

When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine...

John 2.9

Because each jar held 20-30 gallons, this means Jesus made 120-180 gallons of wine. The Jews were **careful about their wine**. They detested **drunkenness**, and they would usually **mix** their wine with a larger portion of water before they drank it. They drank in **moderation**. And Jesus **flooded their wedding feast with wine**. By any sane standard, what he did was **immoderate** and excessive. I have been to a lot of weddings in my life, hundreds. I have never been to a wedding feast with 180 gallons of wine. If you want to throw a party like that, let me know!!

Don't you think he is saying something here? Don't you think that he is saying that **when the wine runs out** in your life, when it runs out in your relationships, and you come to him – he can give you more wine on your life than you ever dreamed possible?

This Was the Best Wine

the master of the feast called the bridegroom 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."

John 2.9-10

You know what John is saying here. When you have a party you put your good wine out first, and then when people have had a couple of glasses, you slip the cheap stuff in and no one ever knows. They really don't. Do it all the time! Good wine first. Cheap stuff a bit later.

Doesn't that seem **a lot like life**? The good wine comes first, and then as the decades go on, it's nothing but the cheap stuff?? A lot of people are **living on memories**. The best times are all behind. Nothing but **fog ahead**. People get bitter about this. 'I didn't think it was going to end up like this' we say. But it can.

That's what makes this miracle so remarkable. The wedding steward was stunned by it. Don't you think **Jesus is saying something here?** He is saying that if your marriage, your family, your life seems like the best is all behind you, he can turn it around. So that the older you get the better it is. The longer you go, the sweeter it is. Where **the best wine is still ahead of you**. And it is. The best lies just ahead!

He Did This in a Wedding

This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.

John 2.10

I think it is quite remarkable that Jesus did his first miracle in a home.

If you were going to **script the start of his ministry** would you have chosen a minor miracle at a wedding? – and most of the people at the wedding didn't even know what had happened. I'd have scripted some **big event on the Temple precincts**. In full public view. That would have given this operation a jump start. But a family wedding in little out of the way Cana in very out of the way Galilee and done so quietly that no one hardly knew it?

Families are so normal in our cultural that we tend to think they are **nothing special**. Everyone grows up in one, and they seem to be everywhere you turn. Most of us think that the **real stuff of life is somewhere else**. A great career. Community impact. Popularity at school or in the workplace. Big bank accounts. Special vacations. But

the day-in day-out fabric of family life pretty quickly gets normal. Dreary. Boring.

But **not to God**. Families are the places where people get their start, where lives are shaped and where character is formed. Not only that, but families are a **snapshot** of something bigger, a picture of something cosmic, something eternal, something far larger than any individual family itself.

John called this miracle a **'sign'** – meaning it pointed beyond itself to something larger. Weddings are like that. It is why one of the **bible's favorite illustrations of salvation** is a set of family snapshots: weddings and marriages and family feasts... pictures of Christ wooing and winning and marrying lost people, adopting new sons and daughters, welcoming us into his own family.

Families are places where **love** and **trust** are first learned. Where **surrender** reaches its life-giving potential. And love and trust and surrender are at the very center of **God's own family life** itself. Inside the life of the Triune God there is love and trust and surrender and life. Your family is a **sign** pointed to that family. Your family is that important.

But families like ours **get broken**. They run out of wine. They get caught in anger and unforgiveness or temptation or inattention – and there we are. The **tragic paradox of our families** is that we value them more than anything, but all too often they are the places where we are **at our worst**, not our best. Many of us treat the ones we love most in a way that we would never dare to treat a casual acquaintance. Why is it that it is too often strangers who see us at our best and those who live with us who see us at our worst?

So Jesus did his first miracle at a wedding. And turned a lot of water into a lot of the very best wine.

He did This When He Was Invited

"Jesus also was invited to the wedding"

John 2.2

And here is the last thing I want to note about this miracle. It **happened because someone invited Jesus to this wedding and then did what he asked them to do.** And a wedding with a very real problem became a great celebration.

I don't want to overplay this, but I don't want to miss it either. **It is important to ask him to come and when he does, do what he asks you to do.** God has given into your own hands the honor and the task of inviting Jesus into the life of your family. He will often wait for your invitation. Or, when he has come, he will wait for you to do what he has asked you to do. The old wisdom is still good for modern times: trust and obey. He will tarry until you bend you knee and bow your head and ask.

This is a good thing to do, again and again in our families, and it is always best to do it together. But if for some reason you can't do it together, remember that it takes just one person to open the door, to send the invitation, to pray this prayer.

Actually, I would like to do that with you as we close today. If you are here with your spouse, or with a child, would you join hands? If you are here alone, would you also pray with me? Because **just one person can open the door** to a whole family.

Prayer...

We come to you today for the sake of our families with fresh faith. We ask you to come to our families, to my own family, and be at home with us.

Make each home, my home, a place where you are welcomed and loved and trusted and known and followed.

We ask you to turn some water to wine in our own homes. To take away anger and bitterness and instead give us your own special love and forgiveness (if you are holding someone's hand, maybe you could squeeze it as a way of saying, 'I forgive, and I ask forgiveness').
Would you bring your healing to our homes, to everyone in our homes,
And would you bless everyone who comes into our home and help them to sense that you, too, live here with us?
Lord Jesus, come to our homes, to my home, and turn water into wine.
Amen.