

Please Pass the Wine – John 2:1-12

As we begin to take a look at Jesus' first public miracle, it is important to remember that John wrote these words, 30 or 40 years after these events took place...much later than Matthew, Mark and Luke put pen to paper. So John, had the benefit of time and perspective. He had time to carefully review and consider all that Jesus had been teaching and preaching. John had the luxury of selecting the important things he wanted to stress. Thus, everything in the gospel of John is particularly placed there for a reason.

Jesus had been in Judea in the south. Today he has arrive in the north, to the region of Galilee, where he grew up. It had been at least a two day walk. The story begins on the third day of the wedding celebration.

Let's pause there. The third day is an important Scriptural reference, found both in the Old and the New Testament. Hosea 6:2 references the day in which Israel would be spiritually healed and

returned to her Lord....on the third day. The resurrection, the third day following his death. Transformation, from death to life. Transforming water into wine on the third day is a deliberate hint of what is to come.

Jesus was at this wedding in Cana with his mother and his disciples.. They really knew how to celebrate in Jesus' day - weddings lasted a week! The whole town was invited. Family and friends came from miles away.

In Jesus' day, engagement or betrothal lasted up to a year before the marriage celebration. The engagement was entirely binding. The couple did not live together or consummate the marriage until the wedding night, even though the betrothed couple were considered to be husband and wife. The engagement bond could not be broken without divorce.

Some scholars feel that the wedding may have been one of Jesus' younger brothers or sisters since Mary figures rather prominently in the story. They also suggest that there was some degree of surprise when

Jesus arrived with 5 disciples. The surprise was not so much that people who were not invited or expected to be there had arrived, but that Jesus had followers.

It would seem that they were not there very long before the hosts ran out of wine....that can happen on the third day of a party, but it is something that would have been embarrassing to the hosts, and not an easy problem to solve immediately. It was not as if they could simply run out to the nearby LCBO and replenish their supply!

Rather abruptly I feel, Jesus' mother turns to him and says, "They have no more wine.", the implication I think, is ...Do something! Fix it! But I am surprised that she doesn't warn him up to her request. "Son, I think they might have a bit of a problem here." "Son, I was just speaking to the host, and, well, he's in a bit of a jam." Something like that. Not just, "Do something!"

It reminds me about the story of the parents who went away on a 4 day vacation, leaving their kids at home with their grandmother. The

parents called home on their first night away and asked how things were going. Their son Simon blurted out, “The cat’s dead”. Well after they began to get over the shocking news, his father suggested to Simon that he should find a better way to break bad news...a more gradual approach. Maybe start off with, “Well, we haven’t seen the cat all day Dad, and gradually arrive at the reality of the situation”.

The next night the parents called again to check in with the kids. Eventually the dad asked how grandma was coping. Again, it was Simon who responded, “Well Dad, funny you should ask about grandma. We haven’t seen her all day.....”

“They have no more wine! Do something!”

John says that changing the water into wine was Jesus’ first miracle. There are what is known as apocryphal accounts of Jesus doing miracles as a young boy, but they are not substantiated.

Nevertheless, it is apparent that his mother expected him to help out and do something! Mary would have heard about what happened

when John baptized him the Jordan.....how the heavens opened up, the voice said, "This is my Beloved". But long before that, she would have remembered the promise from the angel Gabriel, that she was with child to the Lord. She would have remembered all the fuss, and visitors at the stable. Now he has disciples following him!. She has lived with him for 30 years. She knows how resourceful he can be and perhaps she has already seen him perform miracles. Perhaps Mary had a right to expect that he was more than capable of responding to this need.

"Woman, what concern is that to you and me?" Both here, and while on the cross, Jesus addressed his mother as Woman. The NIV translation is "Dear woman". It comes from a particular culture in a particular language in a particular era. Certainly it seems odd to us in 2020 in North America. We shouldn't automatically assume that he was being rude or arrogant.

Jesus says, "My time/ my hour has not come." This phrasing certainly reminds us of his final days and hours when he is to fulfill his

purpose as the sacrifice of the sins of us all. But the time is not now. He must not show too much too soon.

There were 6 stone jars of water near the entrance to the wedding celebration. This water would have been poured out onto the hands and feet of guests upon their arrival as was their custom. It was considered an essential tradition. Each of the jars would have held 20 or 30 gallons. Jesus asked the servants to fill the jars. To refill them would have required several trips to the well over the course of several hours.

When finally the jars were full, Jesus asked the servants, to draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet for tasting. The steward tasted the wine, not knowing that it had been water.

Owners of vineyards around the world have, for many years, been turning water into wine. It is a long and involved process of growth, gathering, crushing and fermentation. It is a long, natural process.

In his book entitled Miracles, C.S.Lewis points out that every miracle of Jesus is simply a kind of short-circuiting of a natural process.....doing instantly what generally takes a longer period of time. Without laying on of hands, or any word or gesture or prayer, in utter simplicity, Jesus turns the water into wine. And not just any wine, lip smacking good wine. The steward calls the bridegroom and says, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and the inferior wine **after** the guests are drunk, but you have kept the **good wine** until now.....the 3rd day of the celebration!"

And the bridegroom's response.....nothing. Either he was left speechless or John did not think that what he had to say was significant.

But John has something to say –

"Jesus did this, the first of his signs, or miracles, in Cana of Galilee, and he revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him."

When the wedding celebrations had concluded, Jesus went down to Capernaum with his mother, his brothers, and his disciples. They remained there for a few days.

This water to wine passage reveals the glory of the Son of God. The teacher is more than he seems. John the Baptist called him the Lamb of God. Others called him the Messiah – the long awaited one, the Son of God. Whatever you choose to call him, it was the glory of God, shining out from within him.

This passage also reveals that faith is a process. Seeing the miracle of changing water into wine inspired faith in his disciples. The more miracles they witnessed, the more their faith grew. But it was never a complete process. Doubt was never far away. After spending 3 years with him, watching him be crucified and then rise from the dead, afraid, they still hid behind locked doors and did not even recognize him as they walked the dusty road with him. Faith is a journey.....a process....it takes time, study, and life experience.

May God bless you on your journey as you see and hear about, the reality of God's love alive and well in the world today! May you see the light of God's love revealed all around you....and may you continue to grow in your faith, this day and all the days of your life!

Amen