“A Wedding in Cana”

John 2:1-12                   January 24, 2016

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Lesson Text: John 2:1-12

1. “And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there:
2. And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage.
3. And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine.
4. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come.
5. His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.
6. And there were set there six waterports of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece.
7. Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim.
8. And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it.
9. When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom,
10. And saith unto him, every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now.
11. This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.
12. After this he went down to Capernaum, he, and his mother, and his brethren, and his disciples: and they continued there not many days.”

Lesson Summary

As romance filled the air and the town rejoiced in the jubilant affair, the birthing of miracles was about to take place.

Brides and grooms have many different ideas and wishes for their special day. Some like nighttime candle lit themes and others like weddings outside by the beach. For some, the ceremony is short and sweet. For others, like the Jews in Jesus’ day, it could be a weeklong celebratory event involving everyone they knew.

No matter the weddings you have seen or even dreamed of, this wedding in Cana on that day was set apart from the rest as an absolute original never to be repeated again. It became more than the wedding of the century. It became one that story’s been told over and over again throughout all history since that day.

What marked this particular wedding as being original had nothing to do with the design, theme, or expense of the affair; but, because the extraordinary happened during this seemingly ordinary event.

“The mother of Jesus was there” in attendance already, supposing by some that she was a relative or a close friend of the family who had members that were to be wed. Jesus Himself was “called, and his disciples, to the marriage” giving even more reason to believe that Mary and Jesus had close ties with the newlyweds. As the festivities got underway at some point in the midst of it all Mary and supposedly the hosts of the affair realized there was a shortage of an essential staple present at these events, the “wine.”
This family in this remote village (where purchasing more on a moment’s notice was probably nearly impossible) would know no small embarrassment at the lack of wine during such an important occasion. This would be considered a huge social blunder and a reason of scorn and derision for the family. Not to mention the mockery of the bridegroom and his bride on what is supposed to be the happiest day of their life.

They are the ones being honored, yet because of this misstep in properly planning for the event and the amount of people in attendance, they would be ridiculed to say the least. Such an error in a culture known for these elaborate feasts and gatherings (the wedding could last a week long) where hospitality was key would not be soon forgotten. They had social expectations from those in attendance that needed to be filled.

Mary, whom we are already supposing to be closely knit to the family with the dilemma, does what any good Christian should do when facing crisis: she took the problem to Jesus.

She approached Him and said what seems to be in a pretty straightforward fashion, “They have no wine.” Could one image her wringing her hands as she realizes the scorn this family could face when the blunder comes to light? Then, could it possibly be that the worry lines that started to sketch across her face begin to disappear as she laid eyes on her son, the Son of God, who held all the answers she needed?

Why else did she seek out Jesus? She knew He could do something to remedy the situation. There is an old saying that “familiarity breeds contempt,” meaning those closest to you don’t respect you as much as others would because they know too much about you. In this case, it is because Mary knew emphatically the realness of who Jesus is and His true identity, that she had no qualms about seeking His help in the time of this desperate situation.

Jesus respectfully replied to His mother’s query for help, saying, “Woman, what have it to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come,” (vs. 4). There is a time and season for all things. Isn’t that what the book of Ecclesiastes tells us (see Ecc. 3)?
Therefore, wouldn’t He who was present before time began and will be present when time on this earth comes to an end have a good handle on when it is the right time for Him to act or not?

Jesus always had a keen idea on His “hour” (compare Matthew 26:18, 45 and John 12:23). What He was asked to do and what He was about to do would usher in a no turning back moment propelling Him full speed ahead into His earthly ministry toward that end result at Calvary. Everything had to be done precisely and according to His “hour,” here known as identifying His moment of beginning to reveal His true identity not only to His mother, but to the world in wait for the Messiah to appear.

His mother was not put out or dismayed at His response. In fact, she acted confidently in faith that He would offer some sort of solution to the problem at hand. Turning to the servants who were present with her she simply stated, “Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it,” (vs. 5).

Did she overstep herself? I don’t believe so. I believe if she had Jesus would simply have chosen to not perform the miracle at all. In fact, I think she acted in the boldness of all she knew Him to be.

From time to time throughout His life growing up she must have pondered the time when she received the news from the angel Gabriel of the Child she would give birth to; back when he initially spoke to her informing her that He “shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest;” (Luke 1:32); back when he spoke, “that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God,” (Luke 1:35). Those thoughts must have carried her through some difficult days and gave her pause to remember that He, her Son, being the “Son of God,” was everything that God was and is.

Social obligations and expectations aside, she knew in her heart that He could fix the problem at hand because of who He was and confidently told those in service to follow His orders. With that, she went on about her business of helping out with the wedding leaving everything in the hands of Jesus.
If you will allow me to interject here for a moment, didn’t Mary do exactly what the Word encourages saints to do with every problem: take it to Jesus and leave it there. Are we not told in Psalm 55:22 and 1 Peter 5:7 to “cast” our burdens and cares on the Lord? Give Him what is troubling us because He cares about the problems we face? Mary became a great, real-life illustration on how to do just that.

Now, back to our lesson.

Jesus answered her request. Noticing the “six waterpots of stone” at hand for ceremonial “purifying of the Jews,” Jesus instructed the servants to “Fill the waterpots with water.”

Each of these vessels held about 20-30 gallons of fluid depending on the size and shape of the vessel. They were there for the purpose of ritual washings. Here, they may have been made available for guest to wash their hands before eating. Possibly water from these vessels would be poured out and used for some guest who may have had their feet washed upon entering the house much like we see explained in other Bible stories (ex. Jesus washed the disciples feet at the Last Supper).

No matter the reason they were there, now they would become vessels for the Master’s use. Jesus was going to employ these ordinary containers to hold and pour out a miracle for people to enjoy.

The first step toward that miracle is to do exactly as Mary said. To reiterate, she said, “Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.” The servants who would carry out the details of this miracle had to obey the voice of Jesus. No obedience = no miracle. (Side note: This almost became a hindrance in Naaman receiving his healing from leprosy when he initially refused to do as instructed until one of his own men pushed the idea that he should follow and obey the voice of the prophet, (see 2 Kings 5 for full story).

Obedience enjoined with faith equals miracles. On many occasions of His miracles performed, Jesus just did what needed to be done and healed, delivered, or set free. At the same time, on other occasions His instructions being followed
was pivotal in receiving said miracle (see John 9:7). Therefore, “they filled them up to the brim,” (vs. 7). The servants carried out Jesus’ commands leaving no room at the top. Jesus said fill them up and fill them up they did.

Jesus then told them, “Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast.” We don’t know if the servants could visibly at this point still see water in the pots or did they actually see the wine in the waterpots. The “governor of the feast” was the man in charge of all that was taking place during the celebration. Were the servants actually being asked to serve the governor water to drink from a cleansing pot, they must have wondered.

I personally believe that it still appeared to be water in the pot to the servant and this too was a step of faith in obedience. The reason I believe this is because verse 9 tells us “but the servants which drew the water knew,” indicating that it was still water when they took it out of the vessels and gave it to the governor. They and the governor were astonished at the results (even though the governor didn’t know previously where the wine came from – vs. 9).

Pulling the “bridegroom” aside the governor exclaimed, “Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now,” (vs. 10). The governor was under the impression that the bridegroom had kept the best for last. But, this wasn’t the case at all. The bridegroom and his party ran out of supplies to keep the celebration in full operation. They were finished and set up to be a social embarrassment.

Jesus stepped in to the rescue in what is noted as the “beginning of miracles” He did in “Cana of Galilee.” Jesus didn’t save the best for last. He totally transformed the ordinary into the extraordinary making water become the best wine anyone had ever tasted.

The real end result was not to get the best tasting wine possible for Jesus. When those disciples who were with Him saw what He did, this encouraged and strengthened their faith in Him and they “believed on him” all the more.
In what seems to be a minor miracle (I think not) to some compared to others that would shortly follow, really was something terrific that “manifested forth his glory” to those around Him. Jesus was not a mere man trying to gain a crowd to follow Him. These men witnessed His power in action for the first time and it was astounding. No one who wasn’t approved by God; no one who wasn’t God in the flesh could alter the structure of something as simple as water and create it to be something totally different as wine.

We must keep in mind that what was given to the governor was not water that tasted like wine; rather, it was real, official wine. Normally, this comes about through the grapevines with fruit that has been harvested and pressed and aged for a time. But, when Jesus gets ahold of simple H2O He created it to be something it wasn’t or didn’t have the structure to be.

No wonder their faith was encouraged by what they saw. This was one of the purposes for the miracles that Jesus did. They validated Him to the world seeking a Savior. Later in John 10:38 Jesus says, “Though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him.”

Only the Son of God can do such things as these and that’s a cause for belief in Him all by itself.

After the wedding celebration Jesus “went down to Capernaum, he, and his mother, and his brethren, and his disciples: and they continued there not many days,” (vs. 12). From this point on Jesus became fully engulfed in His earthly ministry.

“Capernaum,” at this time, was a respite before heading to Jerusalem for the Passover celebration (see John 2:13).

It was there at Jerusalem where Jesus became displeased and angry over what was going on in His Father’s house and flipped the tables of the merchants (see John 2:16). The disciples that were with Him at this time were clued in even more to His true identity by what they witnessed (see John 2:17), and even more miracles were performed that attested to the fact of who He really was (see John 2:23).
“Capernaum” later would serve as a major place of activity during His earthly ministry, including more miracles. It was there where the centurion asked for help for his servant and Jesus sent a healing his way (see Matthew 8:5-13). It was there where Peter was instructed to look in the mouth of a fish for money to pay tribute (see Matthew 17:24-27).

What started with wine would eventually end with His blood flowing from Calvary’s cross. The truest of all miracles performed by the Lord who washed our black sins whiter than snow through His red blood offered as a Lamb sacrificed in our place.

Amazing!