

Select verses – Jesus said to the servants, “Fill the jars with water,” so they filled them to the brim. Then he told them, “Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet.” They did so, and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine... This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.

Dear friends in Christ,

Take a moment, and think to yourself: what 3 miracles of Jesus were the most powerful and beneficial of all the miracles that Jesus ever performed. The three that come to mind for me would be: Jesus' resurrection from the dead on Easter Sunday, calming the wind and the waves to save his disciples from drowning, and the feeding of five thousand people with just five loaves of bread and two fish. Those are three miracles that I find rather impressive. But the first miracle of Jesus, the changing of water into wine, seems to be nothing more than a warmup act – like a juggler juggling 3 tennis balls as a warm up act before moving on to the grand finale, juggling 3 chainsaws while riding on a unicycle. Now I know, you and I couldn't change water into wine, and Jesus' miracle did keep a bride and groom from being embarrassed during their wedding celebration, but still, what's the big deal? Does this miracle really matter when you stack it up against the other miracles that Jesus did? No dead person was brought back to life. No disease was instantly cured. No evil spirit was driven out of a person. Instead, the thirst of a wedding party was quenched. That was all...or was it? The miracle of changing water into wine does matter because it teaches us what should matter the most in our lives. Let's find out what that is.

This miracle occurred at a wedding in the small town of Cana not too far away from Jesus' childhood home of Nazareth. Jesus and his disciples (who numbered only five or six at this time) were invited. We don't know who was getting married. It may have been a relative of Jesus' mother, Mary, since she seemed to have an active role in making sure that there was plenty of food and drink at the reception.

So, would you have invited Jesus to your wedding? Perhaps you did. He was there in the Word of God that was preached at your wedding ceremony. But what about afterwards? Did you invite him to the reception? You may have called on his name in the prayer before the meal but were you glad to get that done with so you could “cut lose” and forget about that “Jesus” stuff for a while? If we think that inviting Jesus to our gatherings will turn them into boring and dull events, we should think again. It was in fact Jesus who kept the party going at the wedding in Cana.

Jewish wedding celebrations in the 1st century often lasted as long as seven days. If you didn't plan carefully, you were bound to run out of something. And unfortunately, that's what happened in Cana. They ran out of wine. Mary was aware of this and so she came to Jesus and said: **“They have no more wine”** (John 2:3). From Jesus' response we know that Mary was doing more than just reporting facts. She wanted Jesus to help. Jesus, however, replied: **“Dear woman, why do you involve me? My time has not yet come”** (John 2:4). Does that sound like the Jesus you know? Not really. It sounds a bit like a young man who has forgotten that he should still be respectful of his mother. But Jesus was not in fact being disrespectful. He literally said to Mary, **“This matter is not your concern, but mine.”** A significant event in Jesus' life had taken place just before this wedding. We observed that event last week, the baptism of Jesus. There at his baptism, God the Father identified Jesus as his Son, and the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus in the form of a dove to signal the beginning of his public ministry. In other words, Jesus was no longer Mary's little errand runner who would go off to the local market for some milk or vegetables when needed; no, he was the Savior of the world. As the Savior, Jesus had come to serve but that doesn't mean that Mary, or we, should treat him as our servant.

Mary took the needed rebuke in stride. She didn't turn away in a huff, but instead turned to the servants standing nearby and said, **“Do whatever he tells you”** (John 2:5). What a wonderful example of faith Mary demonstrates! She realized that Jesus' rebuke didn't mean, **“No, I won't help.”** Instead, she trusted that Jesus, who had made time to be at a wedding in an insignificant town, loved the bride and groom and cared about their wedding. And so, she

doesn't prescribe the means, the measure, or the manner in which Jesus should help, she just trusts that in his time he will.

“Do whatever is best, Jesus.” That is what our prayers should always include! But instead, we give our Lord detailed instructions including a timetable for how to answer our prayers as if we know what is best. Yes, God wants us to pray specifically and boldly but he doesn't want us to forget our place...or his. We are nothing but dust, and sin-filled dust at that. He, on the other hand, is the all-wise and all-knowing God. Before Mary even told him, Jesus knew that there was no more wine. If it really had been a pressing problem, Jesus would have taken care of the need before Mary was even aware of the shortage. Instead Jesus thought it better that there be a crisis before he acted. And that is still often the way God will operate. He is still in the habit of emptying us before he fills us up. But why does he do that? He does this so that we will turn to him more often for the help that we need, because Jesus always does what is eternally best for us.

So what did Jesus do about the wine shortage? He told the attendants to fill up six stone water jars that held between 20-30 gallons each. They did and then he instructed them to take that water and give it to the master of the banquet for tasting. Wouldn't you love to know what these servants were thinking as they hauled the water jars to the master of the banquet? If they had witnessed the exchange between Mary and Jesus, they probably thought this was some tasteless joke. Jesus obviously didn't care about fixing the problem. If he did, he wouldn't have sent them to the well to haul back six huge jars filled with water, instead he would have sent them to the liquor store.

Don't we often think the same about Jesus? We look at all the suffering and pain in the world and imagine Jesus must not care because he doesn't seem to be doing anything about it. But he is doing something about it just as he was doing something about the wine shortage in Cana. When the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine he called the groom over to commend him for the quality of the wine being served. If my math is correct, Jesus supplied the equivalent of 960 (750 ml) bottles of wine! If the bride and groom didn't want to serve any of Jesus' wine at the banquet, they would have been able to enjoy one bottle of premium wine a day for the next two and a half years of their married life.

So did the miracle of turning water into wine matter? It certainly mattered to the bride and groom at this wedding in Cana. Jesus took care of them in their time of need and he did so with the highest quality. This miracle also mattered to Jesus' disciples for John said: **“This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him”** (John 2:11). The disciples now had some tangible proof that Jesus was who he said he was: the Son of God. And so this miracle also matters to us because it's proof that God is not far away and unconcerned about us. He mixes with us sinners and he provides what we need at the proper time – even giving us something as insignificant as a glass of wine.

Of course, what we really need from Jesus is forgiveness for treating him as our servant and for accusing him of not caring about us or for us. We need forgiveness for not inviting him to our parties because we wanted to give free reign to our sinful nature. The same Jesus who turned water into wine is the Jesus who now offers his own blood with wine for the forgiveness of our sins in the Lord's Supper.

Again, it might not be the most spectacular miracle in the Bible, but the miracle at Cana matters because it teaches us that what should matter most to us is a humble faith that trusts that the Son of God is always near us and will do what is best for us. Jesus may never give you 960 bottles of premium wine (because it's probably not what would be good for you) but through his death and resurrection he has given you something even better: a place at the eternal banquet in heaven. No, you're not seated at that banquet yet. You may have to endure some challenging days now but cling to Jesus through thick and thin, as Mary did in Cana, and you won't be disappointed! Amen.