

JOHN 2:1-11

2 On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. ² Now both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding. ³ And when they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to Him, "They have no wine." ⁴ Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come." ⁵ His mother said to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do *it*." ⁶ Now there were set there six waterpots of stone, according to the manner of purification of the Jews, containing twenty or thirty gallons apiece. ⁷ Jesus said to them, "Fill the waterpots with water." And they filled them up to the brim. ⁸ And He said to them, "Draw *some* out now, and take *it* to the master of the feast." And they took *it*. ⁹ When the master of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom. ¹⁰ And he said to him, "Every man at the beginning sets out the good wine, and when the *guests* have well drunk, then the inferior. You have kept the good wine until now!" ¹¹ This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him.

WATER CHANGED INTO WINE-THIS IS JESUS' MOST UNUSUAL MIRACLE RECORDED IN SCRIPTURE.

IT HAS BOTH DISTURBED AND ENTERTAINED CHRISTIANS FOR CENTURIES.

CHRISTIANS WHO DO NOT DRINK ALCOHOL FOR RELIGIOUS REASONS HAVE STRUGGLED TO EXPLAIN THE MIRACLE, AND JUSTIFY WHY WOULD JESUS HAVE DONE SUCH A THING.

SOME EMPHASIZE THAT WINE WAS A COMMON DRINK BECAUSE THE WATER WAS SO BAD. OTHERS INSIST THE ALCOHOL CONTENT WAS VERY LOW.

THERE IS, HOWEVER ANOTHER SCHOOL OF CHRISTIANS WHO REALLY LIKE THE MIRACLE, ESPECIALLY THE REMINDER JESUS ATTENDED ORDINARY SOCIAL EVENTS.

CHILDREN HAVE MADE INTERESTING REMARKS ABOUT WHAT JESUS DID AT THE WEDDING IN CANA. ONE CHILD EXPLAINED THE MESSAGE OF THE MIRACLE IS: "IF YOU ARE HAVING A WEDDING MAKE SURE JESUS IS THERE."

ANOTHER SAID THE STORY MEANS: "WHEN YOU RUN OUT OF WINE GET DOWN ON YOUR KNEES AND PRAY." MARK TWAIN EVEN COMMENTED ON THE STORY SAYING, "NO WONDER JESUS WAS INVITED TO SO MANY PARTIES."

THE QUESTION WE SHOULD PONDER IS- WHY WOULD GOD HAVE INSPIRED JOHN TO INCLUDE THIS EVENT IN HIS GOSPEL?

PERHAPS IT IS BECAUSE, THE POINT OF THE STORY IS NOT REALLY ABOUT THE WINE, BUT ABOUT JESUS' IDENTITY AND HIS POWER.

AFTER ALL, WE CAN BE SURE THAT THE SAVIOR WAS NOT USING HIS POWERS FRIVOLOUSLY, NOR SIMPLY TO PLEASE HIS MOTHER.

IN FACT, HE MADE IT CLEAR TO MARY THAT HIS PURPOSE WAS TO DO THE WILL OF HIS FATHER IN HEAVEN. SO WHAT, WE MAY WONDER, MOTIVATED JESUS TO CHANGE THE WATER INTO WINE?

ONE THING THAT MAY HELP IN OUR UNDERSTANDING IS THAT IN THE BIBLE WINE IS OFTEN USED TO SYMBOLIZE JOY, ESPECIALLY JOY IN THE LORD.

ANOTHER POINT OF NOTE IS THAT THE WEDDING FEAST IS OFTEN USED IN SCRIPTURE AS A METAPHOR FOR THE REIGN OF GOD.

CONSEQUENTLY, ONE WAY TO UNDERSTAND THE MIRACLE, OR SIGN, AS IT IS CALL BY JOHN, IS THAT IT POINTS TO JESUS AS THE ONE WHO BRINGS US THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

AND ONE OF THE BLESSINGS OF CHRIST'S REIGN IS THE ABUNDANCE OF GRACE AND JOY.

THE MIRACLE AT CANA DIRECTS OUR ATTENTION TO THE TRANSFORMATION JESUS BRINGS IN PEOPLE'S RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD.

IT ALSO FORESHADOWS THE REPLACEMENT OF THE OLD COVENANT OF THE LAW, BY THE NEW COVENANT IN CHRIST, SEALED BY HIS BLOOD.

THE STONE JARS WOULD HAVE HELD WATER FOR THE RITUAL CLEANSING ANY DEVOUT JEWS WOULD ENGAGE IN.

JESUS CHANGING WATER IN TO WINE SYMBOLIZES HE HAS PURIFIED THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN HIM FROM WITHIN, THROUGH HIS SACRIFICE ON THE CROSS, AND RESURRECTION.

JESUS' FIRST FOLLOWERS, OF COURSE, WOULD NOT HAVE SEEN OR UNDERSTOOD THE MIRACLE IN THE SYMBOLIC WAY WE DO TODAY.

HOWEVER, THEY WOULD HAVE SEEN THAT JESUS, WHOM JOHN THE BAPTIST CALLED "THE LAMB OF GOD", HAD ABILITIES UNLIKE ANY OTHER MAN.

THE MIRACLE WOULD HAVE UNDOUBTEDLY INSPIRED THEM TO WANT TO KNOW JESUS BETTER AND THUS CONTINUE TO FOLLOW HIM.

BUT PERHAPS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT MESSAGE FOUND IN THIS STORY IS BROUGHT TO US BY MARY. IT IS ALSO FOUND IN THE COMMENT BY THE CHILD WHO SPOKE ABOUT PRAYING WHEN YOU RUN OUT OF WINE.

"WINE" IN THIS SENSE IS NOT LITERALLY THE DRINK BUT INSTEAD OUR WORLDLY OR PERSONAL RESOURCES.

INDEED, NO MATTER HOW WELL EQUIPPED WE ARE, THERE ARE TIMES WHEN THE WINE RUNS OUT, WHEN WE ARE ILL OR TIRED OR OVERBURDENED BY FINANCIAL OR OTHER DEMANDS THAT WE CANNOT MEET.

THE ISSUE DIFFERS FROM PERSON TO PERSON AND CHURCH TO CHURCH, BUT THE TRUTH IS IF WE LIVE LONG ENOUGH, WE ARE EVENTUALLY GOING TO RUN OUT OF SOMETHING.

WHAT THEN ARE WE TO DO WHEN OUR WINE RUNS OUT AND THERE DOES NOT SEEM TO BE ANYWAY FOR US TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM ON OUR OWN? THIS IS WHERE MARY'S EXAMPLE IS HELPFUL.

SHE KNOWS EXACTLY WHAT TO DO TO AVOID THE CRISIS WHICH WOULD HAVE RUINED THE WEDDING FEAST, AND BROUGHT SHAME UPON THE NEWLYWEDS THAT MIGHT HAVE LASTED FOR YEARS.

MARY TURNS TO JESUS AND LETS HIM KNOW ABOUT THE NEED. BUT NOTICE, SHE DOES NOT ACTUALLY MAKE ANY DEMANDS OF HIM.

SHE DOES NOT EVEN OFFER ANY SUGGESTIONS. SHE SIMPLY TELLS HER SON THAT THE WINE HAS RUN OUT, SHE WAITS FOR JESUS' RESPONSE, AND LISTENS TO HIS REPLY.

JESUS FIRST, REMINDS HIS MOTHER THAT IT IS HIS FATHER'S WILL HE HAS COME INTO THE WORLD TO DO.

MARY, IS NATURALLY CONCERNED WITH THE IMMEDIATE CIRCUMSTANCE OF HAVING NO MORE WINE FOR THE CELEBRATION. SHE IS WORRIED ABOUT THE IMPACT IT WOULD HAVE ON THE BRIDE AND GROOM AND THEIR FAMILIES.

ON THE ONE HAND THIS IS A RELATIVELY SUPERFICIAL MATTER IN COMPARISON TO LARGER PROBLEMS IN LIFE. BUT ON THE OTHER HAND, HUMAN LIFE CAN BE GREATLY AFFECTED IN POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE WAYS BY WHAT OTHERS MIGHT VIEW AS LITTLE PROBLEMS.

JESUS, HEARD HIS MOTHER'S UNSPOKEN REQUEST- AND YET NOTHING HE HAS DONE OR WILL DO CAN CONFLICT WITH THE WILL OF GOD.

THE THINGS OF GOD HE HAS COME INTO THE WORLD TO DO CONCERN THE SALVATION OF THE SOUL, THE RESTORATION OF LIFE, MAKING PEACE BETWEEN US AND GOD.

RUNNING OUT OF WINE, EVEN AT A WEDDING, IS HARDLY AN ISSUE HE NEEDED TO CONCERN HIMSELF WITH.

HOWEVER, GOD IS NOT ONLY FOCUSED ON SPIRITUAL THINGS, FOR HE SENT HIS SON INTO THE WORLD IN A HUMAN BODY- WHICH MEANS OUR PHYSICAL CONDITION IS RELEVANT.

JESUS' ANSWER REMINDS MARY HE IS A GROWN MAN, NO LONGER UNDER HER AUTHORITY, AS WELL AS SUGGESTING HIS PURPOSE IS NOT TO SOLVE EVERYONE'S PROBLEMS.

WHAT IS REALLY INTERESTING IN THIS STORY, AS WELL AS INSTRUCTIONAL, IS MARY'S RESPONSE.

SHE DOES NOT ARGUE OR BEG OR EVEN TRY TO EXPLAIN HERSELF BETTER, BUT INSTEAD ACTS IN CONFIDENCE THAT JESUS KNOWS THE SITUATION AND LEAVES IT UP TO HIM.

THEN, BEFORE SHE WALKS AWAY, MARY TELLS THE SERVANTS-"DO WHATEVER HE TELLS YOU". HERE IS AN EXAMPLE OF HER ABSOLUTE TRUST JESUS HEARD THAT NEED AND WOULD RESPOND IN HIS OWN WAY.

HER WORDS TO THE SERVANTS ALSO DRAW OUR ATTENTION TO THE FACT THAT THEY HAD A PART IN ENABLING THE MIRACLE.

IF THEY HAD NOT DONE WHAT JESUS SAID, THE JARS WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN FILLED WITH WATER AND THEREFORE JESUS WOULD NOT HAVE TURNED THE WATER INTO WINE.

THE OBEDIENCE OF THE SERVANTS TO JESUS, WAS WHAT MADE THE MIRACLE POSSIBLE.

SIMILARLY, PARTNERSHIP WITH CHRIST IS WHAT CHRISTIANS ARE CALLED TO -AFTER WE ARE SAVED BY HIM.

INDIVIDUAL CHRISTIANS, AS WELL AS CHURCHES, ARE NEITHER EXPECTED TO ENHANCE THE KINGDOM OF GOD ON THEIR OWN, OR EXPECTED TO SIT BACK AND LET JESUS DO IT ALONE.

THIS IS TIED TO MARY'S STATEMENT ABOUT DOING WHAT JESUS SAYS. IT IS GOOD ADVICE FOR US.

HERE WE ARE CALLED INTO PRAYER AND ACTION FOR OUR PERSONAL NEEDS, AND OUR NEEDS AS A CONGREGATION, A DENOMINATION, OR ANY CHRISTIAN ORGANIZATION.

NOTICE ALSO -THAT WHILE MARY FOCUSED ON WHAT WAS LACKING- NO WINE, JESUS SAW WHAT THERE WAS TO WORK WITH-EMPTY JARS AND AVAILABLE WATER.

PEOPLE, ALONE OR IN A COMMUNITY, OFTEN GET CAUGHT UP IN A SIMILAR FOCUS AS MARY'S, LOOKING ONLY AT WHAT IS LACKING.

OF COURSE, IT IS NECESSARY TO RECOGNIZE NEEDS, WHETHER OUR OWN OR SOMEONE ELSE'S. BUT AS CHRISTIANS WE ARE ALSO REMINDED TO SEE BEYOND THAT, TO WHAT GOD HAS DONE IN THE PAST AND WHAT GOD CAN DO IN THE PRESENT AND FUTURE.

THEN WE NEED TO OFFER TO THE LORD WHAT RESOURCES WE HAVE- PRAYER, TIME, WILLINGNESS, MONEY, SKILLS, ETC.

VERY OFTEN, WHILE WE DO NOT HAVE ENOUGH RESOURCES, WE DO HAVE SOMETHING TO WORK WITH, AND TO OFFER THE LORD.

HEREIN IS ANOTHER MESSAGE THE MIRACLE POINTS TO-GOD CAN AND WILL WORK WITH US TO FULFILL HIS WILL, EVEN WHEN WE DO NOT HAVE ALL OF THE RIGHT INGREDIENTS TO MEET A SPECIFIC NEED OR SOLVE A PARTICULAR PROBLEM.

WE, THEREFORE, CAN LEARN FROM MARY TO TAKE THE PROBLEM TO JESUS, AND TRUST HE WILL RESPOND IN THE WAY HE KNOWS IS BEST.

WE ALSO NEED TO BE WILLING TO LISTEN TO WHAT HE SAYS AND DO WHAT HE TELLS US, EVEN WHEN IT MAY NOT MAKE SENSE TO US AT THE TIME.

OF COURSE, EVEN WHEN WE DO THIS TO THE BEST OF OUR ABILITY, THERE IS NO GUARANTEE THE MIRACLE AT CANA WILL BE REPEATED IN THE WAY WE WANT IT TO BE.

IN OTHER WORDS, GOD WILL NOT ALWAYS MEET, LET ALONE EXCEED OUR EXPECTATION LIKE JESUS DID AT THE WEDDING.

MUCH LIKE THE EXPERIENCE OF THE FIRST DISCIPLES, THERE ARE THINGS JESUS WILL DO OR WILL FAIL TO DO THAT SEEM INEXPLICABLE TO US.

OUR FAITH WILL BE TESTED, ESPECIALLY WHEN GOD SAYS “NO” OR WHEN WE DO NOT HEAR A RESPONSE AS QUICKLY AS WE WISH.

YET, WE ARE STILL CALLED BY THE SAVIOR TO “COME AND SEE” HOW GOD’S WILL IS MANIFESTED THROUGH HIM, AS WELL AS WITHIN US AND OTHERS.

LET US PRAY: LORD JESUS, WE PLACE OUR TRUST IN YOU. HELP US BELIEVE IN YOUR GLORY AND GRACE. EMPOWER US TO WORK WITH YOU, AND TO LOOK EXPECTANTLY TOWARD THE FULLNESS OF THE FUTURE YOU BRING. AMEN

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