

Sermon Series Four: Believe and Live
(The Gospel of John: Signs of the Messiah - 1:1-12:50)
John 2:1-11
Lord of the Wine

This morning we find ourselves right in the middle of a big, fat Jewish wedding. Jewish weddings were important and joyful occasions and often the entire community joined in the celebration. They would last anywhere from 3 to 7 days and a key part of the ceremony was the wine. In Jewish thought, wine was a symbol of joy and celebration and there was no rejoicing apart from serving wine. What interests us is that Mary, Jesus, and his disciples have been invited to the ceremony. At some point the wine runs out which in this culture is a major faux pas - a huge embarrassment. To fail to provide adequately for the guests would involve social disgrace. In the closely knit communities of Jesus' day, such an error would never be forgotten and would haunt the newly married couple all their lives. Further, grooms had a legal responsibility to provide a suitable feast for their guests. So the bridegroom stood to lose financially - say, up to about half the value of the presents Jesus and his party would have brought. Even more interesting is that this is the setting of his first of seven miracles recorded in the Gospel of John. Now you've got to admit that this would seem to be an unlikely place to perform your first miracle. You would never invent a miraculous solution to a social embarrassment as your first miracle. We would expect to see lightning, earthquakes, or a resurrection from the dead. But we wouldn't expect to see the Messiah at an obscure wedding turning water into wine. Why did Jesus do it this way? And how does this manifest Christ's glory as it declares in verse 11? The answer is found in who he came to be, what he came to do, what he has to offer, and how we can receive it.

I. Who He Came to Be - The Master of the Feast

In Isaiah 25:6-9 we read, ⁶ *On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined.* ⁷ *And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations.* ⁸ *He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken.* ⁹ *It will be said on that day, "Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation."* The Lord is coming with a rich feast of good wine and will remove the death shroud from his people forever. Jesus will be the fulfillment of this prophecy and will bring the "real fun." He will be the real

life of the party - *the master of the feast!* He will usher in a time of unbridled joy and true feasting will begin.

II. What He Came to Do - To Prepare for His Future Wedding

1. One of the most striking things in this story is Jesus's answer to his mother, "*Woman, what does this have to do with me?*" Why does he address her so abruptly or even rudely? First, Jesus is addressing her in a polite formal way such as he does on the cross, "Woman, behold your son." Second, Jesus's words to his mother are simply a reminder that the need she has pointed out is a relatively minor one. "Don't worry," he seems to say, "Their predicament is nothing to us. They will survive quite nicely even if they have no wine." It will soon become clear that Jesus is not refusing to act. Jesus is distancing himself because he is focused on something much greater than the present need. He is alluding to the fact that he has grand and glorious purposes that go far beyond what he will accomplish in this place, in Cana. Further, she must remember that His Father's will and timing are pre-eminent at all times and in all places.

2. The phrase, "*My hour has not yet come,*" points to the fact that Jesus is thinking about two things. His mind is troubled and is a million miles away as he sits there at the feast.

1) Jesus is thinking about his wedding.

You see we often think of God as a King and we are his subjects, a Shepherd and we are his sheep. But the Old Testament on more than one occasion reminds us that God is a husband, a bridegroom, to his wife - the people of God (e.g, Isaiah 62:4-5; Jeremiah 2:2; Hosea 2:16-20). In the next chapter, John the Baptist speaks of Jesus as the bridegroom and Israel as his bride. Paul speaks of the church as being the bride of Christ. Revelation 19:6-9 speaks of the marriage feast of the Lamb. Just as when a married couple attending a wedding is reminded of their wedding or just as a single person dreams of a future wedding, so Jesus most certainly is looking forward to that marvelous wedding feast when the redeemed of all the ages will be wedded to Christ. This wedding in Cana is just a small picture of that grand and glorious event ahead.

2) Jesus is also thinking about what it will take for him to provide wine for his wedding.

The hour Jesus is speaking of is most certainly the hour of his death. It would be this excruciating suffering, this abandonment by God, this bearing of the sins of the whole world, "this cup," that he would ask deliverance from in the garden of Gethsemane. At the Last Supper he would refer to the cup of wine as his blood. And so as he turns the water into wine, he looks into the future when he will refer to the wine of the Passover as a symbol of his blood being poured out for sinners. The path to his great wedding feast would begin with the cup of the passion week. As one pastor remarks, "In the midst of all this joy Jesus is sipping the coming

sorrow.” It is also noteworthy that the water that would be changed to wine came from six large stone water jars. They were used for ceremonial washings symbolizing purification from defilement. Jesus’s blood cleanses sinners from all their impurities - from all their defilement. These stone jars would have held anywhere from 120 to 180 gallons of wine. The enormity of this provision of wine for the feast symbolizes the abundance of Jesus’s provision for our sins and the abundance of literal wine in the messianic age (Isaiah 25:6; Amos 9:13-14; Jeremiah 31:12-14; Joel 3: 18). *“Behold, the days are coming,” declares the LORD, when the plowman shall overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows the seed; the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it. ¹⁴ I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel, and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine, and they shall make gardens and eat their fruit.”*(Amos 9:13-14)

III. What does He Come To Offer You - Joy, Love, Power!

1. He comes to offer you the joy of the feast.

As I look at contemporary Christianity it seems to me that many are sadly lacking in joy. They have the doctrine right but there is little of the supernatural joy and exuberance that is to be one of the outward marks of the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ in a Christian. The Bible tells us that one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit is joy (Galatians 5:22). Psalm 32:11 declares: “rejoice in the Lord and be glad, you righteous; sing, all you upright in heart. Psalm 16:11 speaks of the Lord as filling us with joy and eternal pleasures. Jesus declared that his desire was that our joy may be full (John 15:11). There is coming a day when all the redeemed will sing and shout with joy as they participate in a sumptuous wedding feast. But we can begin to taste that joy now!

2. He comes with the extravagant love of the bridegroom.

Jesus is saying to you this morning that he is the groom and you are the bride. What is it that only the groom and pastor see clearly at a wedding? They see a beautiful and ravishing bride coming down the aisle. It doesn’t matter what she physically looks like, she still appears to be a thing of great beauty to the groom. Jesus the bridegroom is ravished with you the bride and has given his complete self to you just as he asks you to give your complete self to him.

3. He comes with the extraordinary power of the Messiah.

The emphasis on the excellent quality of the wine produced by Jesus reminds us of the extraordinary nature of Jesus’s miracles. He not only cures the royal official’s son but does so long distance, a highly unusual way of working miracles. He does not merely heal a lame man, but one who has been an invalid for 38 years. He feeds thousands of people from five small barley loaves and two small fish when it would’ve taken a month’s wages just for each person to have one bite. He does not merely give sight to a man gone blind, but one who has been blind from birth. He

does not merely raise a dead man, but one who has been dead for four days and his corpse exudes a stench. He comes into your life, into your ministry, into your problems with the same extraordinary power.

Conclusion

How do you receive what he has to offer? First, we begin by admitting that we are “out of wine.” We are spiritually and morally bankrupt and/or we lack the lasting joy Christ is offering us. **Second**, we are willing to submit and yield everything to Jesus. Mary simply responds by saying, “Do whatever he tells you.” She accepts his statement humbly and does not nag him about it. She knows who he is and what he can do. So she simply trusts! She allows Jesus to take care of the problem in his own timing and his own way. **Third**, we rest in the fact that we have been perfectly provided for. When the master of the feast tasted the wine, he, in effect, said that this was the best wine ever! **Fourth**, we rejoice that the perfect marriage awaits us. This Jesus is in the wedding business and what he is saying to you and to me in this earliest of miracles (which is to show who he really is and what he will really do) is if you will ask anything of me then my intention is to provide everything that you need in this life - to rid you of sin and shame so that you can be wed to me forever. And in that wedding of one so dear, one so close, one so powerful there will be an eternal life with him. So when the things of this earth grow strangely dim, as hard as they have been, our hearts continue to rejoice because we recognize the one who has vowed to us as the one who is in the wedding business—whether in sickness or in health, plenty or in want, sin or shame—you are mine says our bridegroom, both now and forever.