

Epiphany 02 - John 2:1-11 - Marriage & Family

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John 2:1-11

Three days later, there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee. Jesus' mother was there. ²Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the wedding.

³When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no wine."

⁴Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does that have to do with you and me? My time has not come yet."

⁵His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

⁶Six stone water jars, which the Jews used for ceremonial cleansing, were standing there, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. ⁷Jesus told them, "Fill the jars with water." So they filled them to the brim. ⁸Then he said to them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." And they did.

⁹When the master of the banquet tasted the water that had now become wine, he did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew). The master of the banquet called the bridegroom ¹⁰and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and when the guests have had plenty to drink, then the cheaper wine. You saved the good wine until now!"

¹¹This, the beginning of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed in Cana of Galilee. He revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him.

God's Work in the Background of Marriage

When I was in high school, I started filming weddings. It was one of my first side media jobs. When I got to college, I began DJ-ing weddings, and I did it all through college, grad school, and even part of seminary (So, if you're planning on getting married, you can have your pastor DJ for you...). But over the many, many weddings I've been at, I've seen a lot of things go horribly wrong. The rings being lost and running out of food weren't even the worst of things. Many of these were inexcusable, but all of them were humiliating for the couple, a shameful way to begin life together, a shame being brought on them and the rest of their family who was there.

Our text today describes another wedding, where something else went wrong, another shameful way to begin a marriage: They ran out of wine. And before you think in today's terms where many wedding guests try to drink as much as they can in the three hour time of a modern reception, in ancient Jewish times, the wedding party would last a whole week. The wine was much more than something to get inebriated with.

Many, many times in the Old Testament God uses wine as a picture of the spiritual joy that exists through His Church. Listen to these words from Isaiah 25:6, "*On this mountain [that is, God's eternal Church - His Kingdom on earth & in heaven] 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.*" Wine was a symbol of physical and spiritual joy, future hope, and abundance - something that only God could give.

Running out of wine at a wedding was a social blunder. What was a way to show the joy that you had over all that God had blessed you with on your wedding, to run out of that, was humiliating. It was a shameful thing.

Last week we saw the examples of Mary and Joseph and how they put God's Word first in their lives. Here, we again have Mary and her trust in her Son as a wonderful example for us. Mary goes to Jesus and explains to Him that they had run out of wine. Jesus responds, it would seem to us, a bit strange, perhaps even harsh. But He's talking to her as a disciple. What He's really saying to her is "what common interest do we have my activity here?" Mary wanted Jesus to perform a miracle and avoid embarrassment. Jesus needed to reveal Himself as the

Messiah, but only in the time appointed by the Father in heaven. That time would ultimately come three years later when Jesus would prove He was the Messiah, the Savior of the world, by His death and resurrection. Mary believed and trusted Jesus, so she tells the servants of the feast to “do whatever Jesus tells you.”

Jesus sees six stone jars of water, and He turns them into wine. And not just any wine, but the best wine ever. And there’s a lot of it. Those six stone jars contained anywhere from 120 to 180 gallons. So now there’s nearly 180 gallons of wine. That’s a lot of wine. Only the most generous of families could have provided all of that. Jesus tells the servants to take it to the master of the feast. When he tastes it, it’s so good, he has to compliment the groom for such great wine. What would have been a shameful humiliating thing to have run out of wine, had the master of the feast known about it, Jesus turns into a great compliment. And the groom didn’t even know what had happened. He never found out what Jesus had done. He didn’t know that Jesus had not only saved the wedding festival, but had made it better.

John calls this the first “sign” Jesus did in Cana. It was a miracle, but it was more than just a miracle. A “sign” pictures something. First, this sign is a picture of what God does for us in marriage.

I remember the first wedding I filmed in high school. After the wedding service was over, my mentor (who was a faithful member of our church) mentioned that he could tell that this couple was going to last. I was surprised he would say that because this was in our own church. Why wouldn’t they last? They’re members of our church. Sadly, even among Christian marriages, the divorce rate is about 40% (compared with about 50% for the national average). But my mentor noted that you could usually tell who has their priorities in the right place.

Some will acknowledge through their wedding service that God takes priority. Others will simply use the wedding service as an occasion to get onto, what they view as more important things, more happy things, the fun of the reception. But often, that view will accompany the bride and groom throughout their marriage. They’ll be looking for more happy times. They’ll go through hard, difficult times in their marriage, and forget to ask for God’s help or be in His Word, and they’ll use the entire estate of marriage simply as an occasion to be happy. Often at their spouse’s expense. This can lead to a relationship being ruined, all by simply having priorities out of line - something that may have been evident already at the wedding.

Now that’s not to say that husbands and wives who are faithful in their use of God’s Word together and who make God their priority already from day one will have it easy. All marriages go through rough times. Wives will offend their husbands, they’ll fail to honor them. Husbands will hurt their wives, they’ll fail to love them unconditionally. Both will let other things, their own preferences, free time, work, or hobbies, or even let other people come between them and their spouse.

But how many marriages have been saved because husbands and wives spent time together in God’s Word? Through God’s Word, they understood the importance of forgiveness, they understood the self-sacrificing love that Jesus had already shown to them, the love that encourages and motivates them to love each other, even if it doesn’t seem that love is being returned, and through God’s Word, they grew closer together in love and unity.

And without even either the husband or wife realizing it, by their time spent together in God's Word, Jesus had not only saved their marriage, but made it better. Uniting them not only as man and wife, but uniting them spiritually, to be members of the same church, each working toward the same goal of heaven. For those of you married, how many times has Jesus helped you in your marriage without you even realizing it?

All of this; marriage and Jesus' saving and making better the wedding at Cana, is a picture of what God does for **all** of us in His Church.

Scripture calls the Church, us, the bride of Christ. And as the bride, we've failed to love Jesus completely. We've failed to commit ourselves only to Him. We've let other things come between Jesus and us. We've let other things become more important than Him; our own preferences, our free time, our work, our possessions. We are responsible for ruining our relationship with God.

But Jesus doesn't give up on us. In fact, He loved us unconditionally. He did what no other groom could do. He lived with us for His entire earthly life, not once giving into the temptation to let something come between Him and us. And then when we deserved to be punished for our sins of unfaithfulness to Jesus, He didn't push us aside and look for a better companion. He wouldn't let us suffer. He took on the punishment and gave up Himself completely, dying in our place.

And then, He rose from the dead, and as a perfect groom, He takes us back to His Home, to heaven. He provides for us, He gives us everything we need and more. He not only saves us and our union with God, like He saved the wedding at Cana, but He does more. He blesses us. He gives us more than we deserve. He gives us more than we can imagine, and more than we ever even know about.

When I was DJ-ing weddings, I was trained to do more than just DJ. We would take care of problems behind the scenes. If something was going wrong with the schedule or if the cooks weren't ready, we'd take care of things, and fill time; sometimes we'd even have to go out looking for certain people or run to the store during the reception to get something that was needed. Most of the time the bride and groom had no idea what we were doing, they thought we were just there to play music, and that's fine. The bride and groom at the wedding at Cana had no idea what Jesus had done for them.

But Jesus' disciples knew. He did this miracle to show them His power. And it's through those disciples that we have this written down for us today. So that we know of Jesus' power, His great blessings to us, and above all, His unconditional love to us, His bride, the Church. Even if we don't understand how Jesus is working, we can be sure He is, through the testimony of His Word and Sacraments.

Jesus' generosity at the wedding at Cana is a sign for us of His generosity towards us as His bride. He's already done the best and most important thing for us: He's united Himself to Us in the perfect Marriage, Christ's union to us, His Church, and He'll bring us to the Marriage Banquet of heaven, blessing us with the fullness of joy and happiness forever. The joy and happiness that scripture pictures through wine, that we'll have a foretaste later this morning, will finally be ours in fullness. It'll be a wedding reception where nothing goes wrong. All our shame

will be gone because through baptism, our groom has taken it on himself and covered us with the most glorious and bright wedding garment of all, His righteousness.

That's a good marriage. That's Christ's Union to us. Amen.