**Pastor Tim’s Message Notes from February 28, 2021
The Best For Last**

Currently at our home, all four of our daughters are enjoying learning how to cook. Even Mya, our 4-year old, is beginning to learn as well.

And one of the things that they enjoy making are deserts. And while deserts are not always the best for our diet, they sure taste good and they’re a great way to conclude a meal. In fact, after someone begins eating a desert, there is usually no going back, right. We like to finish the meal with the sweet taste lingering well afterwards. And sometimes for meals in general, many people like to save the best for last.

Today we begin a new sermon series that is not only about meals that Jesus took part in, but we also see Jesus saving the best for last.

Please turn with me to a story from God’s Word that you’ve probably heard before. It is found in John chapter 2:1-12. And the meal that Jesus was taking part in was not just any meal, but none other than a wedding feast.

Let us hear God’s Word together.

**2 On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus’ mother was there, 2and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. 3When the wine was gone, Jesus’ mother said to him, “They have no more wine.”**

**4“Woman,[**[**a**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+2%3A1-12&version=NIV#fen-NIV-26100a)**] why do you involve me?” Jesus replied. “My hour has not yet come.”**

**5His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.”**

**6Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.[**[**b**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+2%3A1-12&version=NIV#fen-NIV-26102b)**]**

**7Jesus said to the servants, “Fill the jars with water”; so they filled them to the brim.**

**8Then he told them, “Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet.”**

**They did so, 9and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside 10and said, “Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now.”**

**11What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.**

**12After this he went down to Capernaum with his mother and brothers and his disciples. There they stayed for a few days.**

At this point in Jesus’ life, He had begun to call people to follow Him. We are told from this passage that His disciples were invited to this wedding celebration along with Jesus Himself, Jesus’ Mother and Jesus’ brothers.

But it appears at this point that Jesus had yet to publicly reveal Himself to be the long-awaited Messiah. And going by the words of Jesus in this story, I do not believe that Jesus intended to make this wedding the moment that He would begin to publicly reveal His glory and identity. I think probably He was there simply to celebrate this special occasion.

Now weddings in first century Palestine were definitely rather public events. While there would be a limited number of guests, any news of a miracle would spread like wild fire.

Also, it was likely that this couple were close friends or extended family to Jesus’ family. Mary would not have learned that the wine had run out unless she was someone who was very close to the wedding party.

Now before we go into the particular miracle that Jesus performs at this wedding, it is helpful to slow down and consider what Jesus’ presence at this wedding meant.

**First, this is a Scripture that is often referenced at weddings**. The presence of deity in the flesh at this wedding is one way that the Lord affirmed the sacredness of holy marriage between man and woman.

**Second, Jewish wedding celebrations at that time were lengthy and could last several days, even up to a week. And yet Jesus took time from His ministry to celebration. Jesus would have sung and danced and ate and drank with them.**

Friends, our God is a God of celebration. He wasn’t too busy to take time and celebrate with His people. We see that God is a God of celebration through the Old Testament as well, with the festivals that the Jewish people were to take part in.

So in the midst of the busyness of our lives, please take time to celebrate. Celebrate God’s grace towards you in Jesus. Make time to make joy a priority.

Sometimes we have a picture of Jesus that is all serious all the time. Some people have wondered if Jesus ever smiled. But it is hard to picture this when we consider Jesus taking part in this time of joy and celebration.

Now at that time, the financial responsibility of paying for a wedding celebration lay with the groom. Now, as someone that has four daughters, that doesn’t sound like such a bad idea. :) But not to worry. Just kidding on that.

Part of this responsibility was to make sure that there was enough wine available for everyone available throughout the celebration. Wine or grape juice would be a treat. It would be something tasty, in some ways similar to the deserts that I spoke of earlier.

And for the wine to run out would be considered an embarrassment to the groom. It would be a mark of shame in a more shame-based culture.

And Mary, sensing the impending embarrassment, turns to her Son for help. At this point, Joseph had likely passed away and Mary had undoubtably leaned on Jesus to help support them as a family.

And Mary knew that Jesus was no ordinary child. She knew that he was the Savior, the Messiah. She didn’t know what Jesus would do in this situation, but she is looking for help.

So she comes to Jesus and says **“They have no more wine.”**

Now Jesus, while fully divine, was likely not expecting to be put on the spot in this situation. Jesus had already begun calling his disciples, but I believe that He knew that if He would publicly reveal His power and authority, once the cat’s out of the bag, things will begin to be set in motion that would lead Him to the cross. And he didn’t want to get ahead of His heavenly Father’s timing on things.

So He says **4“Woman,[**[**a**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+2%3A1-12&version=NIV#fen-NIV-26100a)**] why do you involve me?” My hour has not yet come.”**

In John’s Gospel, when Jesus speaks ‘my hour,’ it always refers to His passion.

Jesus is not being disrespectful to Mary. His saying ‘woman’ would be similar to our saying ‘Ma’am’ today.

And then Mary, in her final words recorded in Scripture, makes a wonderful statement of faith. She says to the servants at the wedding banquet, **‘do whatever He tells you.’** What a statement of faith. She trusted in Jesus, not knowing what He would do. The best advice is simply to do whatever He tells you. What good words for us to live by as well today.

Now we are not told if Jesus immediately instructed the servants on what to do or if we had a quiet moment in prayer with His heavenly Father. We do know from Scripture that it was Jesus’ regular practice to find quite times to be alone with His Father in heaven.

I picture the Father speaking a quick word to Jesus that it is now time to begin His public ministry, because we see Jesus instructing the servants on what they were to do.

Now John wrote that **6Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.[**[**b**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+2%3A1-12&version=NIV#fen-NIV-26102b)**]**

These are stone water jars used for ceremonial washing for the Jewish people to ceremonial wash their hands and other items like dishes and pots to symbolically purify themselves before God. These became traditions among the people.

But Jesus chose to use these jars in a different way.

**7Jesus said to the servants, “Fill the jars with water”; so they filled them to the brim.**

This would be somewhere between 100 and 150 gallons of water we are talking about here. That’s a lot.

**8Then he told them, “Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet.” And they did so.**

Again, they are being obedient. And we do not know exactly when the miracle happens. But we do know that the servants knew that they filled these jars with water and they knew that Jesus had supernaturally turned the water into wine.

And then we come to the climax of this story. The master of the banquet tastes this wine and is absolutely blown away by it. In same ways it would be like they were drinking toddlers Juicy Juice and then he is given some Welsh’s grape juice.

But this was very clear to a man who knew his wines quite well. What was now being served was the best He had ever tasted. And there is no going back. The best wine was saved for last. **And instead of shame, Jesus brought honor to the groom that day.**

Again, news like this would spread quicky. Jesus’ public ministry had begun. And again, we are reminded in this Lenten season, that his public ministry climaxed in the coming weeks nearly 2,000 years ago, as Jesus underwent His passion for us.

So friends, in light of this powerful story, what are a few takeaways for our lives not only for this Lent, but as we follow Christ throughout the year?

**First, in reflecting on Mary’s words to the servants “do whatever He tells you,” we are reminded that to follow Christ is to do whatever He tells us**. And He tells us what to do in two primary ways. One is through His written Word. We see His will for our lives in so many ways laid out for us in the Bible. So being in the Word is so important. But just as important is being led by God’s Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit helps us to do what Christ tells us to do. The Holy Spirit helps us to understand God’s Word. The Holy Spirit helps us to follow Christ. And the Holy Spirit may speak to you through other people or through songs or movies or nature. He’s very creative. But He lives to point people to Christ. So get to know the Holy Spirit well and He will help us do whatever Jesus tells us to do.

Whatever our Lord tells us to do, we are to respond in obedience, like the servants in this story. Even though by God’s grace we are adopted as God’s children, at the same time we are to live to obediently serve Him, as faithful servants are to do.

Friends, for a church to be vibrantly alive for Jesus, we all need to be listening for His leading in our lives. Listening to what He is telling us to do. Maybe its to volunteer for something or to join a Bible study or a small group. Maybe God gives you a creative idea for a new ministry or is calling you to witness of your Christian faith to someone. We are called to move forward in faith and obedience. Every day is a new opportunity to do this.

**Second, we are reminded in this meal setting with Jesus that God saves the best for last**. As awesome and wonderful as the Mosaic Covenant was that the Lord made with Israel, Jesus was now beginning to establish a new and better covenant with all who would respond to Him in faith. Jesus used 6 stone jars that were used for ceremonial washing as vessels to not only bring joy to the wedding party, but also to reveal that in Him the Lord is doing something new.

This miracle of Christ reminds us that as Christians we need to read the Old Covenant through the lens of the New Covenant. Christ is to be the lens by which we are to read all of Scripture.

And this saving the best for last is done in other ways in the gospels. Worship is not so much about location --- about the Temple or other places, it is now just about the heart. Worship is not so much about the clean and unclean food of the Old Covenant, it’s about the state of a heart devoted to the savior of the world, Jesus Christ.

What better place than a wedding, brothers and sisters, for Jesus to publicly revel His glory? I can’t think of any.

**And third, the wine is a symbol of joy**. Nowhere in the Bible does God promote drunkenness, but wine can bring joy and be pleasant. Likewise, there is no joy that this world can offer that remotely compares to the joy of knowing and following Jesus Christ.

**And fourth and finally, this story is a reminder of Jesus Christ’s sovereignty and power**. Like our Heavenly Father and like the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ is God. Here we see Jesus creating wine out of water. He has created us as well and He re-creates us new creations through our faith in Him.

Let’s pray…

Resources:

BibleGateway.com

The Gospel According to John – D.A. Carson

The Gospel of John: A Commentary Volume One – Craig Keener