

“His Disciples Believed in Him”

John 2:1-11

A wedding. In first century Jewish culture weddings took place on Wednesdays. The usual festivities consisted of a procession in which the bridegroom’s friends brought the bride to the groom’s house for a wedding supper, and then the festivities would last seven days.

One of the most well-known and certainly the longest wedding party in scripture is found in Genesis 29. Jacob has gotten into a fight with his twin brother Esau over inheritance and money issues. Sound familiar? Fearing for his life, Jacob runs away to the east where he meets a beautiful young woman named Rachel who is watering her father’s flocks at a well. Jacob falls in love with Rachel, but having run away from home, has nothing with which to pay a dowry to Rachel’s father, Laban. So Jacob agrees to work seven years for Laban in order to have Rachel’s hand in marriage.

In Genesis 29:21-30, we find the story of what happened during the 14 day wedding festivities. ²¹Then Jacob said to Laban, "Give me my wife that I may go in to her, for my time is completed." ²²So Laban gathered together all the people of the place, and made a feast. ²³But in the evening he took his daughter Leah and brought her to Jacob; and he went in to her. ²⁴(Laban gave his maid Zilpah to his daughter Leah to be her maid.) ²⁵When morning came, it was Leah! And Jacob said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me? Did I not serve with you for Rachel? Why then have you deceived me?" ²⁶Laban said, "This is not done in our country — giving the younger before the firstborn. ²⁷Complete the week of this one, and we will give you the

other also in return for serving me another seven years." ²⁸Jacob did so, and completed her week; then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel as a wife. ²⁹

(Laban gave his maid Bilhah to his daughter Rachel to be her maid.) ³⁰So Jacob went in to Rachel also, and he loved Rachel more than Leah. He served Laban for another seven years.

Jacob probably had too much wine to drink on his wedding night so that when the veiled woman came into his tent, he did not realize it was Rachel's older sister until the next morning. So Jacob completes the 7 days of festivities for his marriage to Leah, then 7 more days for his marriage to Rachel, then 7 more years of service in payment for two of Laban's daughters. Jacob is blessed with 12 sons, 10 from Leah and 2 from Rachel and their maids. Rachel's oldest son is Joseph who will become a great leader in Egypt after his older brothers sell him into slavery out of jealousy.

A wedding. A wedding in the small town of Cana in Galilee. Cana is about 3 ½ miles northeast of Nazareth in the Galilean hills west of the Sea of Galilee. In verse 1 we read that, "the mother of Jesus was there". Some have speculated that a relative of Mary and of Jesus was being married.

Verse 2 says that, "Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding". If it was not a relative of Jesus, it could have been a relative of Nathanael, one of Jesus' disciples, who grew up in Cana.

A wedding. Jesus, his mother, and his disciples are invited. This would have been a real change of pace for some of Jesus' disciples who had previously been following John the Baptist, living in the desert, and eating locust pods and wild honey. Following their new spiritual director,

they find themselves back in civilization and in the midst of a 7 day wedding celebration with real food and the blood of the grape flowing throughout the week.

A wedding festival. Verse 3, “the wine gave out”. More people came than expected? Poor planning on the part of the family and the bartender? Or as they called him in those days, “the wine steward”. For whatever reasons, the wine gave out.

When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine”. Why is Mary concerned and why does she turn to Jesus? Is she asking for a miracle? No, Mary is making no request but simply reporting a desperate situation. “They have no wine”. The blood of the grape has run dry.

Verse 4. And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come”. Jesus answers his mother by refusing to become involved as though he knows his mother well enough to know that she really was asking him to do something.

It is kind of like when you say to your son, who has been driving your car all over creation for the past week, “the car is out of gas”. It sounds like you’re simply reporting a desperate situation. “The car is out of gas”. Your son knows that what you really mean is, “you and your friends have used up the gas. Now go fill the tank”.

This is the woman who raised him. Jesus knows how she communicates and what she means. It’s like the disciples of Jesus coming to him in the midst of thousands of hungry people who have been listening to Jesus preach and saying to him, “They have nothing to eat”. The expectation is that Jesus will do something in response to reporting the desperate situation. He shouldn’t need to be asked.

A wedding with the wine run out. Jesus refuses to become involved. “Woman what concern is that to you and to me?”

We need to know that in the first century, “Woman” was neither an impolite term nor an indication that Jesus did not love his mother. It was a normal and polite way of addressing women, unlike today.

“What concern is that to you and to me?” It’s none of our business.

“My hour has not yet come”. It is not time to reveal who I really am.

Jesus refuses his mother in a very polite way. But Mary does not let it go. Maybe she’s upset with her son and his friends for suddenly showing up out of the wilderness without any wedding gifts. Maybe she feels like these wilderness and homeless hooligans have drunk more than their fair share of the wine before it gave out. Who knows? Mary does not let it go.

Verse 5. His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you”. Mary believes Jesus will do something, despite his refusal. Mary seems to have no doubt that Jesus will intervene but is uncertain how he will intervene. Mary knows who Jesus really is. Mary knows he is the Son of God. She has not forgotten the trip to Bethlehem 30 years earlier, the trip to Egypt to escape Herod, the trip to Jerusalem where Jesus got lost as a youngster but was found in the temple, and his most recent trip to the Jordan River where he was baptized by John. Now he returns to the hills in which he was raised, being followed by disciples. Mary knows who Jesus is and believes he will do something even though he says it’s not quite time.

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

“Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons”.

You have to love this. These are huge stone jars that could hold at least 120 gallons of water (6 jars x 20 gallons), that were used by the Pharisees for purification rituals.

Later the Pharisees are going to criticize Jesus and his disciples for not following the pharisaic purification rituals and eating with hands defiled, that is unwashed.

The wedding. Wait till the Pharisees hear what their water jars are about to be used for.

Jesus said to the servants, “Fill the jars with water”, and they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, “Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward”. So they took it. When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom and said to him, “Everyone serves the good wine first, and the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now”.

Jesus is the new wine. The Messiah has come. The Kingdom of God is here. We drink the new wine of Jesus Christ. But – there will always be those who will not believe. Listen to these words from Mark 2:18-22 . . . ¹⁸Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting; and people came and said to him, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" ¹⁹Jesus said to them, "The wedding guests cannot fast while the bridegroom is with them, can they? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. ²⁰The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast on that day. ²¹No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old cloak; otherwise, the patch pulls

away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made. ²²And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost, and so are the skins; but one puts new wine into fresh wineskins."

"New wine is for fresh skins". New wine is for jars that used to hold water for old rituals. New wine is for those who gather around the bridegroom's table at His Last Supper, who eat the bread and drink the wine of Holy Communion with the One who will die on the cross for you and for me. New wine is for the one laying in the hospital bed, I.V.'s intruding, black and blue and discolored, drinking the new wine in remembrance of the One who has prepared the way home. New wine is to strengthen the teenager or the parent continually tempted to turn her back to the kneeling rail at the foot of the cross. New wine is for any person repentant and seeking the forgiveness of their sins. New wine is for you and for me and for any person who believes in Jesus Christ.

Jesus was the One sent by the Father to bring salvation to the world. Turning the water to wine made Jesus' glory shine forth as the first of many miracles through which Jesus' glory would shine.

The most important verse in this gospel text is the last, verse 11.

"Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in Him."

Jesus revealed his glory and his disciples believed in Him as the One sent by the Father to bring salvation to the world.

Every time we drink the new wine of Holy Communion, our faith in Jesus Christ is strengthened as the One sent by the Father to bring salvation to the world.

May the peace of God . . .

So we sing songs of Thankfulness and Praise – Hymn # 310