

- I. The first of many signs and wonders
- A. John 2:1-12 . . . On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there; [2] and both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding. [3] When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to Him, "They have no wine." [4] And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does that have to do with us? My hour has not yet come." [5] His mother said to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do it." [6] Now there were six stone waterpots set there for the Jewish custom of purification, containing twenty or thirty gallons each. [7] Jesus said to them, "Fill the waterpots with water." So they filled them up to the brim. [8] And He said to them, "Draw some out now and take it to the headwaiter." So they took it to him. [9] When the headwaiter tasted the water which had become wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the headwaiter called the bridegroom, [10] and said to him, "Every man serves the good wine first, and when the people have drunk freely, then he serves the poorer wine; but you have kept the good wine until now." [11] This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him. [12] After this He went down to Capernaum, He and His mother and His brothers and His disciples; and they stayed there a few days.
- B. This is a story about the first sign Jesus performed to manifest His glory, that is, to reveal the presence and power of God in Him.
1. Notice how it begins – "On the third day." Notice what Jesus did – He took common, ordinary water and turned it into the best of wines.
  2. Now think ahead to Jesus' greatest sign. It took place on the third day, and it reconciles alienated sinner to God and changes common, ordinary sinners into godly saints.
  3. This is not a chance connection, for John's stories not only confirm that Jesus is both human and divine, they also convey deeper truths and show us deeper realities for the purpose of teaching us things about God we might otherwise miss. So though John's stories are simple from one perspective, they are profound from another.
- C. Pray

## II. Changing water to wine – Part 1

A. John 2:1-2 . . . On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there; [2] and both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding.

1. I do not know for certain why John begins this story with “On the third day.” But we do know that Jesus rose from the dead on the third day (Luke 24:46), and there are several profound truths in this story that seem to point to Christ’s greatest sign of all – His resurrection from the dead and the purposes for His resurrection.

a. I also know that Matthew uses the phrase “the third day,” 4 times and Luke uses it 6 times, and without exception, it is used in reference to Christ’s resurrection. Of the four Gospels, John 2:1 is the only place this short phrase is used in reference to something other than the resurrection.

b. However, John follows this “third day” story of Jesus turning the water to wine with the story about Jesus cleansing the Temple – which according to Matthew, Mark, and Luke takes place during the final week of Jesus’ life. This means John placed these two stories together in spite of them taking place at either end of Jesus’ ministry years. In other words, these two stories are not sequential – and that in itself implies John is placing them in this order to convey a particular truth.

c. As we read the story of Jesus cleansing the Temple, we discover that the Temple leaders asked Jesus by what or whose authority He had done what He did.

(1) Jesus answered with, “Destroy this temple, and in three days (or in other words, on the third day) I will raise it up” (John 2:19). This is an obvious reference to His death and resurrection.

(2) In other words, Jesus told them that His authority to cleanse the Temple came from within, because He is God. And He will prove He is God – after they kill Him – by raising Himself from the dead on the third day.

d. Therefore, when looking at these two stories together, we can reasonably conclude that John’s use of “on the third day” in changing the water to wine is fore-shadowing the fact that it will be the same presence and power of God in Christ Jesus that will raise Him from the dead “on the third day.”

2. The second thing I want point out about these first two verses, is that Jesus is traveling with his mother and with His disciples.

- a. For the oldest son to take his mother along or act as the person responsible for her care was a common practice in Jesus day, and especially if his father was no longer with them.
    - b. It was also a common practice for disciples to travel with their teacher, primarily because most of the teaching took place in real life circumstances, not the classroom.
  3. The last thing I want to point out about these first two verses is that Jewish weddings often lasted a week, with guests coming and going all week long. It was the groom's responsibility to feed the guests, and wine was part of what the groom was to provide. Running out of food or wine before the festivities were over would bring shame on the groom and his family, and no groom wanted that to happen.
- B. John 2:3-4 . . . When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to Him, "They have no wine." [4] And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does that have to do with us? My hour has not yet come."
  1. Jesus' mother is spoken of only twice in the entire Gospel of John – here at the wedding feast and at the cross (John 19:25-27). In both places, Jesus addresses her as “woman.” In fact, John does not refer to Jesus' mother, by name, anywhere in his gospel.
    - a. Now I understand that in our culture, addressing an adult female as “woman” is impersonal at best, and derogatory at worst. And this is especially true if the woman is your mother. But in the culture of Jesus' time, addressing even your mother as “woman” was proper and respectful.
    - b. And there is one more truth to take into account in relation to Jesus calling His mother “woman.”
      - (1) We know from the other gospels that Jesus did not regard His parents and siblings as His primary family, for He himself said His family is made up of those who do the will of God (Mark 3:35).
      - (2) Now I know that for most of us, our immediate family is precious to us, yet the family that ought to be most precious to us is the family made up of those who do the will of God.
  2. Moving on, we are not told why Jesus' mother got involved when the wine ran out. Yet regardless of her reason for getting involved, she not only got involved herself, she went to her son with the expectation that He would remedy the problem by performing a miracle.
  3. This implies that Mary knew Jesus' character was such that He would want to help solve this problem, and that He had the ability to

miraculously meet the need. After all, Mary had 30 years to watch and consider and learn what her son was like, and what He could and would do.

4. Upon being asked by His mother to get involved in solving the wine problem, Jesus responded with, “Woman, what does that have to do with us? My hour has not yet come.”
  - a. Jesus’ response may sound disrespectful. However, this same “what does that have to do with us” phrase appears 5 times in the OT and 6 times in the NT. And though it isn’t always translated exactly as it is here, it always implies some level of confrontation, but rarely, if ever, does it convey disrespect.
  - b. Now you may be wondering why Jesus, the perfectly righteous One, would be confrontational with His mother. Here are two reasons for our consideration.
    - (1) First, without saying so directly, Mary was asking Jesus to perform a miracle in order to provide the needed wine and save the groom’s honor. Jesus used a common phrase to let His mother know that she did not have the right to decide when and how He will manifest His powers. That right belongs to God alone.
    - (2) Second, we know from all four Gospels that once Jesus began performing signs, the religious leaders began taking action to discredit Him and even put Him to death. In other words, the first sign Jesus performed would mean His hour of death would begin drawing near – and only God, not Mary, had the authority to decide when Jesus should start that part of His reason for coming to earth.
    - (3) And so Jesus asked a question that went far beyond the need for wine.
5. If there is something we can learn from this, I believe it is the fact that similar to Jesus, our first responsibility for what we say and do is to God, and than to our family, and than to our employer, and on down the ladder of those to whom we have a responsibility in some way or another.
  - a. For example, once we have come to faith in Jesus Christ, His lordship over our lives comes before any other commitment or request or desire. We are His servants, first and foremost.
  - b. Let me explain. If we have entered into marriage, the vows we made to our spouse are secondary to the lordship of Christ. However, our marriage vows take precedence over any subsequent

- commitments we might make or take on – such as children and employment and service in the church and helping others, etc.
- c. One of the challenges we all face is properly prioritizing our commitments so that those which are to come first remain first, and those which were made first take priority over those which were made second or third. and so on. As I have already said, the only exception is our commitment to the lordship of Jesus Christ, which always comes first no matter when we make it.
6. In the final statement of vs 4, Jesus says, “My hour has not yet come” which refers to His death and resurrection. John affirms this in John 13:1, where he says, “Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.”
- C. John 2:5 . . . His mother said to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do it."
1. Though Jesus in essence told her that it was not up to her to decide when and how He would manifest His power, Mary’s faith was such that she persisted as if she knew Jesus would perform the needed miracle. And if we know anything about God, we know that sincere faith – especially for selfless needs – speaks loudly to Him.
  2. There are at least two lessons we can learn – or be reminded of – from Mary’s response of faith in spite of what Jesus said to her.
    - a. First, we are wise to learn what kind of requests are acceptable to God and what kind are unacceptable – based on God’s character and the truths revealed in God’s word. For example, James says that the reason we do not have what we need is because we do not ask. However, if we ask with wrong motives, that is, with the motive to gratify selfish or worldly or sinful desires, we will not receive what we have asked for. Therefore, learn what requests are acceptable, and keep your requests within those boundaries.
    - b. Second, when you are confident your request is within the boundaries of what God deems acceptable, ask with confidence – the kind of confidence exhibited by the widow who persevered in asking an unresponsive judge for legal protection from her opponent, until she got it (Luke 18:1-8).
- D. John 2:6 . . . Now there were six stone water pots set there for the Jewish custom of purification, containing twenty or thirty gallons each.

1. For our benefit, John not only tells us there were six water pots for Christ's use, he includes the fact that they were for the Jewish custom of purification, which in this case most likely had to do with washing their hands before meals and between each course during a meal.
  - a. However, this particular purification ritual was not required by the Mosaic Law. Rather, it was begun by the Jewish Elders and became a ritual that was treated as if it were part of the Law.
  - b. We know this to be true because some Pharisees and scribes acknowledged that this purification ritual was a tradition of the elders when they came to Jesus and asked, "Why do Your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread" (Matthew 15:1-2, Mark 7:3-4).
2. The significance of this part of the story lies in the fact that Jesus took religious utensils that were to be used only for the religious ritual of purification, and used them for that which was common – the making and dispensing of wine for a party.
  - a. And why was this so significant? Because in treating as common that which the religious establishment held to be sacred, Jesus was exposing the emptiness of carefully keeping religious rituals and traditions while ignoring or deliberately breaking parts of God's Law.
  - b. In other words, Jesus was making it clear that there is nothing sacred about faithfully keeping religious rituals and traditions if at the same time you are participating in known sin. In other words, godliness in every area of life is more important than observing religious rituals and traditions (Romans 2:12-16).
  - c. In our day, religious rituals might include such worthy things as having a regular quiet time, attending Sunday church and Wednesday prayer meeting, teaching S.S., serving on a church board, or leading worship. But if you faithfully do these things while ignoring the practice of known sin in your life or allowing such evils as anger, bitterness, ungodly criticism, pride, and greed to continue unchecked, unconfessed, and unrepented, they become empty and worthless – to you and in the sight of God.
  - d. Jesus put it this way when He responded to the Pharisees and scribes who asked why His disciples did not keep the purification tradition of the elders by washing before eating: "Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: "This people honors Me with their lips (by adhering to religious rituals and traditions), but their heart is far away from Me (as proven by their

continued practice of known sin). [7] In vain do they worship Me (they think God is pleased with their Sunday worship while during the week they worship such things as pleasure, money, fame, and possessions), teaching as doctrines (what God says to do) the precepts of men (religious rituals and traditions that men decide are important, but are in addition to what God says). [8] Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men” (Mark 7:6-8).

3. Now I want to be clear here, religious rituals and traditions are often meaningful, sometimes beautiful, and usually intended to be helpful in living the Christian life. However, they do not nor will they ever replace willful obedience and the intentional pursuit of holiness that touches all your behavior.
4. For example, King Saul returned from battle with booty God had told him to destroy, and then he justified his actions by saying he was going to sacrifice some of it to God. To this the prophet Samuel said, “Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams. [23] For rebellion is [just as bad as] the sin of divination, and insubordination (defying or willfully disobeying authority) is [just as bad as] iniquity and idolatry” (1 Samuel 15:22-23).
5. Without question, godliness can include religious rituals and traditions, but godliness never includes leading a double life – one where we carefully adhere to our religious rituals and traditions while carelessly or even deliberately continuing to practice known sin.

### III. Conclusion

- A. In conclusion, I want to remind you that our most precious family is the family made up of those who do the will of God. Our number one responsibility is to God and the will of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. From there we move on down the ladder of those to whom we owe a measure of responsibility. Learn what is acceptable to ask for, and once you are confident your request is within the boundaries of what God deems acceptable, ask with confident faith. And finally, rightly value your religious rituals and traditions – such as the next four Sundays of Advent. But never forget that those rituals and traditions are empty and worthless unless you intentionally and sincerely pursue godliness in all of life.