

## **John: Invitation to a Wedding**

**John 2:1-11**

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On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there; and both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding. When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to Him, "They have no wine." And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does that have to do with us? My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do it." Now there were six stone water pots set there for the Jewish custom of purification, containing twenty or thirty gallons each. Jesus said to them, "Fill the water pots with water." So they filled them up to the brim. And He said to them, "Draw some out now and take it to the headwaiter." So they took it to Him. 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, 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." This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him.

So far God's holy and inerrant word, may He add His blessing to it. Let's pray together.

*Father in heaven, we ask again that you would come and bless us as we study Your word together. We're a needy, needy people, and out of Your word help us to find the rich treasures of Your glory to sustain us, for Jesus' sake, Amen.*

Imagine going to a wedding and you're there and take part in all the activities of the wedding, and you come home and you're on the telephone to a friend and they say to you, "What have you done?" And you say, "I've been at a wedding." And they say to you, "Who got married?" And you say, "I don't know. I have no idea." It's a bit like reading this story. Don't you ever wonder, whose wedding this was? It's a remarkable story. Imagine writing a piece for the local paper about a wedding, imagine reading one, and there's no mention of the bride and bridegroom. Imagine reading in the local paper about a wedding where the wine

runs out, but no mention of the bride and bridegroom. You'd say, "There's something terribly distorted about this reporting." It opens up to us, you see, once again that Bible stories are not just stories. They have a point. They have a very particular focus. And actually this story is just a springboard for actually saying to us something entirely different. It's not the wedding that's important. It's certainly not the details of the wedding. You know, what did the bride wear? It's Jesus that's important and the telling of this particular narrative has in view that we should focus our thoughts entirely upon Jesus. Now, wouldn't that be a wonderful way to close this Wednesday? You've been trying a case or preparing for one perhaps, you've been involved in the ups and downs, and mainly downs of the stock market, and you're thoroughly discouraged, you've come from a hard day's work teaching at a local school. I can't go round the ranges of all the jobs here at First Presbyterian—it would take me too long—but wherever you are, and whatever you've been doing today, the best way to end the day is with Jesus Christ.

Now, there's a clue here in verse 11 as to why it is that John is giving us this story at all. We're in the second chapter of John's gospel and this is the first miracle story, and the first miracle story is of something that happens at a wedding. But John tells us there is something deeply, deeply significant about what happened at this wedding--this beginning of His signs. Now that's one of those words where bells are clanging, because for John, that's a deeply significant word. In fact, the first half of John's gospel is sometimes called the book of signs. He writes this gospel as he tells us in chapter 20 "In order that you may believe." It's an evangelistic tract and what John is setting up for us is story after story after story establishing signs of the true identity of Jesus Christ. Here's the first one--something that happened at a wedding in Cana of Galilee.

### **I. The particular day.**

Now there are four markers that help us understand the nature of this sign that Jesus gives and that John is relating of this story of the wedding at Cana in Galilee. The first has to do with this little reference at the beginning of chapter two that this was the third day. There's something important, there's something significant—at least I'm one of those that believes that it is—as to the fact that in the first chapter and now into the second chapter John has been giving us a fairly careful note of the sequence of days. Now John doesn't do that elsewhere in the gospel. He doesn't seem to be as fixated about what day it is as he is here in the opening two chapters. If you go back into chapter one, the first reference to a day is at verse 29, and that's the next day. So the first day is before verse 29. Whatever happens before verse 29, at the calling of the incident with John the Baptist, is the first day. Then in verse 29 you've got the next day. Then in verse 35, you've got another "this is the next day." John was standing with two of his disciples and so on. Then you've got in verse 39 a reference to the fact that the third day has actually ended and the fourth day has begun because it was about the tenth hour. And then in verse 43, you've got another day; this is day five and

then in verse one of chapter two, the third day and in the inclusive way that Hebrews thought of days, that's the seventh day. If you're confused, don't worry about it. Just accept it; take it verbatim that this is the seventh day. There are some Bible scholars and commentators that think that this is all beside the point and that's there's nothing here at all. I'm one of those who is persuaded that John has been giving us a fairly pointed reference to the passing of days. So that by the time we come to the story of the miracle of Cana in Galilee, we are technically on the seventh day.

Now, can you remember back several weeks when we were looking at the first chapter, and especially the opening prologue of John's gospel, when I said then, and "I'm going to repeat it a number of times as we go through John's gospel, John has in mind as he is writing this gospel narrative the opening two chapters in the book of Genesis: 'In the beginning was the Word.' It sounds like the opening of the Book of Genesis: 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.'" It's as though John's has the first page of Genesis open before him. You know when you're trying to write something and you're looking for some kind of inspiration—I know John wrote by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit—but it wasn't always like dictating to a secretary, and sometimes I think you can pick up the sort of "marker" points at which John may have well been reading that very morning. I have no idea. I will ask him when I get to heaven.

But John is thinking of chapters one and two of Genesis. Why is that significant? It is significant because on the seventh day, God rested from the work of creation. And now John might be saying to us, "On this seventh day, He performs a work of *new* creation." Think of it. Here in this chapter, He's going to make *new* wine. In just a few verses He's going to talk about building a new temple. In John 3, He's going to talk to Nicodemus about a new birth. In John 4, with the woman at the well at Sychar, He's going to talk about a new way of worshiping. So, what we have here is John's version of 2 Corinthians 5:17, "If any man is in Christ, then that person enters a new creation. Old things have passed away. Behold, all things have become new." And in a way, that's the sign that John is giving to us. The new creation. You're longing for the new creation. I couldn't help but think, as we were praying about this hurricane, creation is groaning and travailing in birth. That's what hurricanes mean. It's Romans 8:17, this fallen creation is groaning and travailing in birth. It's waiting for what? The new creation. The new heavens and the new earth, and the miracles of Jesus are a bit like a foretaste, a little snapshot of that new creation. The end is bursting forth into the present, into the now in which we live. And here's the little taste of it. In creating this new wine on the seventh day, the Creator Himself, the eternal word of God, had come to that wedding in Cana of Galilee.

Now, maybe you're saying to yourself, 'I wonder what it would be like to read on the invitation list, you know, 'Mr. And Mrs. So and So, request the presence of Jesus of Nazareth at the wedding of their daughter, 'whatever,'" fill in the blank. Wouldn't that be something? I wonder what that would be like. That would set

some of you in a spin. Imagine, having to prepare a wedding, and Jesus of Nazareth is on the guest list. But the point is, that Jesus of Nazareth is always with His people, the Creator of the heavens and the earth is amongst here this evening by His representative agent the Holy Spirit. "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there I am in the midst," Jesus says. So here's the first marker, the sequence of days.

## **II. Jesus addresses His mother.**

The second marker is the way Jesus addresses His mother. The wine has run out, Mary is in a spin about it, she goes to her son and says to Him, "They've run out of wine." And Jesus says to her, "Woman, what do I have to do with you? My hour has not yet come." Now, I don't know about you, but I couldn't speak to my mother like that. And I don't think that you Southerners, I don't think that you could speak to your mothers like that either. Imagine, speaking to your mother on the telephone and saying, "Woman." So, how come it's right for Jesus to address His mother as "Woman," and why does He do it? There's a very good reason why He does it. The answer?--it's that book of Genesis again. It's not Genesis 1 and 2. John has turned the page now. It's Genesis 3. What's the significant thing about Genesis 3? The first gospel promise, that the seed of the woman will crush the head of Satan. Now, in many ways, and there are theologians and Bible commentators, and there's one at Reformed Seminary, who thinks the entire Bible can be exegeted, no matter where you are in the Bible, can be exegeted in terms of that verse. The whole Bible story is about the fulfillment of that promise made to the "woman." So you see what Jesus is saying? He is saying to His mother, "You are that woman of promise from Genesis 3:15, and I am that seed, that seed that has come into the world to crush the very head of Satan."

What Jesus is saying in that discourse between Him and His mother is, 'I am not just your son, to be ordered about' perhaps, by a mother, as mothers do about their sons, even when they're approaching 50. Mothers have a way of saying, "Derek, you should be doing x, y, or z." Jesus is saying, "I'm not just your son. I am the Son; I am the Son of promise. I am the fulfillment of Genesis 3:15." Isn't it all the more remarkable, and I think that Mary got it, I don't think Mary was the least bit offended by what Jesus said, I think she got it. She got it so much that she says to the onlookers and over hearers of this conversation, words that stagger the mind, "Whatsoever He says to you, do it." It's like one of those texts you want to put up on the wall, isn't it? You want to put it on the glass of your car, you want to put it on the mirror in the bathroom, "Whatsoever He says to you, do it." Because Mary is signaling, I think, that she's got the message; that this son of hers is actually, at the same time, the Son of God--the Creator of the heavens and the earth, the Savior of sinners. That's the second marker.

## **III. The water jars.**

The third marker is the reference to the water jars. Note again that John tells us about these water jars in verse 6. There were six stone water pots, and they were there for the Jewish custom of purification, and each pot contains 20 or 30 gallons each. So, in total, you've got somewhere in the region of 180 gallons worth of liquid. Why six? Maybe it was just six—no more significance than there was six—end of story. But this is John the Apostle who will write the Apocalypse, the Book of Revelation, for whom the number 6 is going to be deeply significant. You know the most significant number, of course, in the book of Revelation is 7. Seven is the number of perfection and the whole book of Revelation hangs together on the hinges of the number 7, deeply significant—seven is perfection. But 6 is imperfection, so that the trinity of six--666 is the mark of the beast. Now, I may be going in flights of fancy here, but John tells us there were six water pots of purification, water pots that were used in the ablution ceremonies of the Old Testament, in the whole process of trying to get rid of sin and the guilt of sin. And it was something that had to be repeated over and over and over and over; there was no end to it. And now the Creator of the heavens and the earth, the Son of God incarnate, the seed of the woman, is going to take that symbol of imperfection and is going to make something new and fresh and something lasting. And don't you think, that at least at one level, John is merely giving to us in a story what he has told us in chapter one, that the law came by Moses but grace and truth comes by Jesus Christ? Here was the symbol of ceremonial law—the six water pots containing the water of purification. The law came through Moses but grace and truth, as John says in chapter one of his gospel, come through Jesus Christ.

Aren't you rejoicing that you are on this side of the Book of Malachi and that you're in the days of fulfillment? That you're not living in days of shadow and type and picture and symbol, and we're going to be uncovering all of those in the tabernacle rituals in the book of Exodus on Sunday evenings this fall. And here is Jesus, the Son of God, and He's going to make something entirely new.

#### **IV. The comment of the master of the feast.**

There's a fourth marker. That fourth marker is the comment of the master of the feast. There are the sequence of days, what Jesus says to His mother, the water jars, and then fourthly the comment of the master of the feast. And the comment of the master of the feast is, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine, but *you* have saved the *best* until now." And what does that say? Well, it says something wonderful. That everything that Jesus does is the very best! All this was wine at the wedding ceremony, that's all it was. Many of you are saying, "So what if they ran out of wine? Maybe it was a good thing." Maybe that's where you are, but don't stay there, because you'll miss the point. Move beyond that, and see the beauty and the blessedness that *that* which Jesus does, time and time and time again, is the very best. The salvation He

gives us is the very best. The garments of righteousness which He gives us to wear are the very best and the finest. I was in a beautiful home last night, and I don't want to take away one moment of the sheer beauty of that home, but as I was driving home I thought, "Yes, that was beautiful; but the mansions of glory are going to be even more beautiful." Isn't it astonishing? Maybe you have a problem with it, but get over the fact that there were 180 gallons of wine. You know that was a lot of wine--far too much for Presbyterians and Baptists.

But do you see the point? The sheer *extravagance* of what Jesus does for us. That's what it means to belong to the Kingdom of God. That's what it means to be in union with Jesus Christ. That's what it means to have your sins forgiven and to have peace with God; you are experiencing the *extravagance* that Jesus bestows. And isn't that a blessing worth going home and contemplating? Let's pray together.

*Our Father in heaven, as we begin to just scratch the surface of this beautiful story, we pray that we might see none but Jesus only. Bless this to our hearts, for Jesus' sake. Amen.*

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