

Personal Evangelism in Biblical Perspective: iShare–Encounters with Jesus in John’s Gospel – The Encounter with Mary, The Mother of Jesus

John 2:1-12

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May 13, 2012 – Morning Sermon

We are in our iShare series on Encounters with Jesus. The encounter this time is with His mother Mary and certainly appropriate on Mother’s Day. In the next study we’ll be looking at Jesus’ encounter with religious professionals at the end of John 2 as we continue our study through this. Let’s look at John 2 where the moment is at Cana. John 2:1-12 says

[1] On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. [2] Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples. [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 this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come.” [5] His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.” [6] Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. [7] Jesus said to the servants, “Fill the jars with water.” And they filled them up to the brim. [8] And he said to them, “Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast.” So they took it. [9] When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom [10] and said to him, “Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now.” [11] This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him. [12] After this he went down to Capernaum, with his mother and his brothers and his disciples, and they stayed there for a few days.

The grass withers, the flower fades, God’s Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may it be preached for you.

We will walk through this text and we’ll have two Old Testament texts to look at. This is an intriguing, different and challenging text. I think this text is intriguing for two reasons. First, this is the text where radical liberals and radical conservatives

have an uneasy agreement and neither one of them like this text. I understand radical liberals because this text has a miracle in it. Anytime a liberal sees a miracle in the Bible they break out in a rash and hives or something like that and they have to explain it away. They will try and explain it away in unbelievable gymnastics. I won't bore you with all of them. Of course radical conservatives that is those who believe to be saved means you can't drink anything alcoholic, have a problem with this text because here Jesus is making something that if they drink they can't be saved. So my goodness, Jesus could not have done that and unbelievable gymnastics are done to explain away the wine which the Bible uses for gladness.

I'm not saying there is not a place for abstinence for I'm an abstainer on this but my reason for abstaining is not because believers can't partake of the fermented fruit of the grape vine. I abstain for personal and ministry reasons. I have seven reasons if you really want to know but it is not because the wine is evil and therefore Jesus could not have made wine. The Bible takes great pains in the Psalms, Proverbs and other passages

to use wine as a way to make gladness with warnings, forbidding of course drunkenness and allowing for the Christian liberty of abstaining for ministry purposes and for one's personal sanctification.

Beyond that let's go to something else that is intriguing. This is Jesus' first miracle which is turning water to wine. I'll say this reverently. Can't You come up with something a little bit better for Your opening act? Why don't we make raising Lazarus from the dead Your first one or casting demons out or healing the blind? Why not those first? Water to wine and a marriage feast? There is no hunger or anyone dying of thirst there. Why the marriage feast? Why water to wine? Why is this the first miracle? Doesn't it make you feel a little uncomfortable when you read this dialogue between Him and His mother? His mother says "They have run out of wine" and Jesus says "Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come." Don't you feel a little uneasiness there with His exchange? John is making sure you hear it. He doesn't hide it. It's in the Bible. I'm sure there were other pieces of that conversation but he makes sure you hear that part.

What is actually going on in this text? What is actually being communicated and why is this the first miracle? I want to get to those questions by answering five other questions that will get us through the text. This is the encounter He has with His mother Mary and this is the first miracle that occurs. The first question I want to answer is when did this happen? In John 2:1 it says that this happens on the third day. That requires some explanation. John has painstakingly walked us through the first week of Jesus' ministry. The Gospels record the last week chronologically for us and they record the first week of His ministry. He has been baptized, tempted for forty days, He has come back and began His ministry at Bethany across the Jordan and the first seven days. This is not the third day of

His first seven days. The phrase the third day goes back to what had occurred earlier and that was the conversion of Philip and Nathanael. This is the third day since their conversion after His encounter with them back in John 1 which had happened on the fourth day.

So we're now at the seventh day of the first week. As Jesus begins His ministry the first day of His ministry He is not even there to participate. He is on His way back from the wilderness to Bethany across the Jordan. John the Baptist is there baptizing and there is an inquisition of him from the people of Jerusalem. John the Baptist bears testimony. Jesus is the Word, the Messiah. They asked John the Baptist, "Are you Elijah? Are you the Prophet? Are you the Teacher? Are you the One that has been promised?" He says 'no' to all of these questions and then says "I am the voice of the one crying out from the wilderness. I'm not worthy to tie His shoes and there is no one like Him." He bears witness of Christ with his testimony. He has an iShare moment with personal evangelism for the people that come to let them know that he is not the One and he points them to Christ.

The second day of the first week of Jesus' ministry He is walking toward John the Baptist and John the Baptist does a Gospel sermon with three points. He says "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." His first point was he identifies Christ as the Lamb of God who fulfills all of the lambs in the sacrifices of the Old Testament who has come for His people. His second point address why He has come and that is to take away sin. He gives you the title of Christ and the mission of Christ. Thirdly, he gives them the scope of His ministry which is He takes away the sin of the world and this Good News is going to be preached throughout all the world. So he preaches a Gospel message.

On the third day of Jesus' ministry comes the first encounter. Jesus is walking by and John the Baptist does a repeat of his sermon and points John and Andrew to Jesus. John and Andrew become Christ's followers and before the day is out they share their testimony with their brothers. Andrew brings Peter and it seems as if the text indicates that John brings James so the church doubles in one day through personal evangelism and Gospel preaching.

The fourth day is another encounter and the church grows again. Philip another student is brought to Christ and now a skeptical student whose name is Nathanael is brought to Christ. Jesus says to him "Come, follow Me. Trust and obey for there is no other way" but when you get a skeptic the message is "Come and see." It doesn't take long until he comes and then Nathanael is converted. The church has now grown to six and the church has its first six disciples. They then set out to Cana which is the hometown of Nathanael. The fifth and sixth day John doesn't say anything about because one day is a travel day and the other day would have been the Sabbath.

So now we have come to the seventh day. So we have just rapidly gone through the first week of Jesus' ministry which is now probably the first day of the week.

Jesus now does His first miracle as He arrives in Cana which is where this encounter takes place. This is about six miles from His hometown of Nazareth and as we learned from Nathanael Cana and Nazareth don't seem to get along too well. So why would Mary of Nazareth be over at Cana? This is speculation on my part but I think there was probably a relative that was getting married and she was part of the invitation along with her family. We are specifically at a wedding feast here in Cana.

A wedding feast is a very big thing. Other than a possibility of a trip to the Passover there would have been nothing bigger in the life of a Jewish person. A wedding feast would have been a gigantic celebration, being as large as one could make it, because in that celebration you are now coming to the consummation within that marriage. A year earlier they would have been betrothed. They would have had every dynamic of the marriage life except the intimacy of the marriage bed. For the entire year they would have remained chaste before the Lord, committed to each other, anticipating the marriage feast and the night of the marriage which is the consummation of the marriage. Throughout the year they learned how to love one another and how to care for one another as they were leaving to cleave to one another.

So this marriage feast was the climatic part of this wedding where the woman is coming to take the man's name as the man is leaving his father and mother and the couple is being joined. The wedding feast is a way to make a statement not only for the joy of the occasions but to the woman it will be clear from the wedding feast his ability to provide for her throughout all of life. It will set the bride's father's heart at ease not only with the purchased dowry but with the wedding feast and the groom's own father would be honored by the way he does because his father would not be ashamed. So the wedding feast is a gigantically important moment.

Let's go to the third question which is who is there? There are a lot of people there because in the Old Covenant such a gathering would have had to be sanctified by the baptismal waters of purification. So there were the six stone jars that were there. You couldn't use clay pots because they are manmade and would have had contamination. Stone jars were carved out of stone and running water from a river would have been put into the stone jars for cleansing. They would hold 20 to 30 gallons of water. The act of pouring the water upon the hands and feet are the baptismal rites that would have been done for purification to prepare for the participation and such amount of water indicates that this was a pretty large wedding feast. Then there is Mary and the rest of her family that is there and Jesus arrives probably the day before and spent the Sabbath in Cana and He has been included in the invitation list. The six disciples are with Him as well – Andrew, James, John, Peter, Philip and Nathanael.

One more person is at the wedding feast that you don't want to miss. It is the man who is in charge. This is a big event and this man has a big responsibility.

He is called the master of the feast or the lord of the feast. This is the man responsible for the accommodations, the food, the drink and everything that is there. He is responsible for the invitation list and that only those who are invited are there. He has full responsibility for this momentous occasion. He is the lord of the feast and he is there as well. So we know when (the seventh day of Jesus' ministry after His baptism and temptation), where (Cana at a wedding feast) and we know who was there.

Now why is this recorded? Jesus' mother has noted that there is a social faux pas that has occurred. There is something terribly wrong and it is more than you and I would know because that is a culture where the issues of honor and shame are important. The bridegroom has not provided enough wine which was there as a chief component of the feast and it's gone. Now it's not Mary's child but perhaps a relative but her mother's heart comes out. So she goes to her eldest son. Perhaps she noticed something different about Him as He's coming along, not that He did miracles as a child according to these apocryphal Gospels. It has already been stated that this was His first miracle.

Mary comes to her son and says "They have run out of wine." Jesus says "Woman, what has your concern to do with Me? My hour has not come." If you read through the Gospels you'll notice that this phrase is used five to seven times if read a certain way. An hour always refers to the cross. The hour for which He came was to save His people from their sins on the cross. Jesus has now set His face toward the will of the Father. At Jesus' baptism the Father said "This is My Son in whom I'm well pleased." Now Jesus is beginning His ministry and the attack of Satan will not stop Him from going to that cross. Peter will be called the personification of Satan because he tries to keep Him from that hour with well meaning words at Caesarea Philippi. Mary wants Jesus to do something about this with no means available which would be a miracle.

The text says a sign. Today we hear that miracles are some entitlement right and that God is this super genie where if you pray it just right you can have a miracle for whatever it is you want. God does the miraculous, there is no doubt about it but God does miraculous not only in the context of needs that He sovereignly determines need to be met but the ultimate issue is the progress of redemption. The miracle is a sign. Paul says it this way "Signs, wonders and miracles." Now work backwards for miracles create wonder in order to establish a sign concerning what God is doing about redemption. She comes to Him to resolve social embarrassment.

When Jesus says to Mary "woman" it's not quite as bad as you may think, yet not to back off your uneasy feeling about this for this would be similar in our language to a term of respect. It would be comparable to 'madam' or 'ma'am.' It's a term of respect but clearly distance. It is the term Jesus will use encountering other women. He uses this with the woman at the well and the woman caught in adultery. Even to marginalized women He would use it for it is a term of respect

but one of distance. "Woman, what does this concern of yours have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come." In other words, you want Me to do a miracle for this moment and the minute I do it the clock ticks for Calvary (My hour). What happens after that?

Here is the fifth question. What happens is that Jesus then does what Mary has inquired of Him about. Jesus does the miracle. Having distanced Himself from His mother yet He is righteous in fulfilling the fifth commandment to honor your father and mother and then He does it. Clearly He does it, not in reference to her or the social embarrassment but for some other reason. How does He do it? He pointedly calls for the six stone jars for purification that would have had the baptismal waters in them. Another interesting thing about this text is that when Jesus says to Mary "Woman what does your concern have to do with Me" that Mary would respond being somewhat upset but there seems to be nothing recorded at all that she is upset. On the contrary she turns and goes to the servants not knowing if Jesus is going to say anything or not and says "Whatever He says, do it."

Since this is Mother's Day I would like to stop and say this. No greater words can come out of any mother's mouth to her children or anyone else than to point to Jesus and say "Whatever He says, do it. Not what I say but do whatever Jesus says." That is binding and has unlimited authority. My authority is always limited by God but His is unlimited. He is the Lord, the Righteous One.

The servants then respond. Jesus tells them to fill up the water jars to the brim and they go and do it. Now He tells them to dip into it and take the cup to the lord of the feast for the water had turned into wine. The lord of the feasts tastes the wine and says "Good gracious this is better than the stuff we were running out of." He goes to the bridegroom and says "What are you doing? This is unusual. The new wine is better than the old wine." He is surprised and not aware that a miracle has taken place. When you have a feast like this you bring the good stuff first. When you drink the good stuff first you really don't care what comes later. So you bring the bad stuff after the good stuff but he said "But you served the better wine last rather than first, this is unusual." He is shocked by it. Jesus will eventually leave this wedding feast and go to Capernaum on a day's trip with His mother, family and disciples.

What is taking place here? Why does Jesus do this miracle? Why does He go to these stone pots? Why does He turn what was carrying water into what is carrying wine? Why was it so better than the previous wine and not just duplicating the previous wine? Why is it that He doesn't do it in response to His mother? Why is it that He's not trying to solve a couple of teenagers embarrassment? What is He saying here? Why is this the first miracle? Why is this miracle chosen to be done to send Him to the cross? He told His mother that her concern was not what He came to die for but then He does the miracle to

address the issue to send Him to His hour. Why would that take place and what is being stated to us?

I think the key is found in three places. The key is found at the end of this text. John 2:11 says *[11] This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.* It was for His glory to be revealed and for faith to be strengthened in those who were following Him. There is something about this miracle that strengthens their faith and reveals His glory.

Cycle back to John 1 where it says in John 1:14, *[14] And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.* We saw His glory in John the Baptist, Andrew, John, James, Peter, Philip and Nathanael the skeptic and now His glory is displayed in the encounter with His mother as He does this miracle. There is something about this that displays His glory and strengthens the faith.

The third part of the key is found in the words of the lord of the feast when he said "The new is greater than the old." The old is passing away and Jesus announces it with this miracle. The Old Covenant, the gracious gift of God with a religion that was pointing out to you time and time again that you were a sinner and you can't save yourself. We need purification and He is using those stone pots from the Old Covenant, those baptismal rites that kept saying you need to be right with God and cleansed. There are all of those sacrifices of blood, bulls, goats and animals and time and time again they are being done. What they are saying is that you're a sinner and you're not right with God. You need to be right with God but the waters of baptism can't do and neither can the blood of bulls and goats. That Old Covenant that was there was graciously pointing out your problems and needs and with prophecies, precepts, signs and types and that promise in the Old Covenant that the answer isn't in you for the answer will come from God. This miracle is now the announcement. The old wine of the world, the old waters of baptism, the Old Covenant is now becoming obsolete.

The New has come, I guarantee it. Christ Himself guarantees it and at My hour, the cross, is where I will secure it. So now this is gloriously being announced. The Old is passing away but it has not just been dismissed for it was pointing to our need of the New and it was pointing to the New. It was pointing to Christ so what is happening is the Old Covenant and its religion is now swallowed up in the New Covenant with life in Christ through His hour and atoning death on the cross. That is what is being announced. It is the glory that the Old is now passed away, swallowed up in the New through Christ at the cross.

How does this reveal His glory? I want to give you four things in this takeaway. One this reveals the glory of Christ as the relentless obedient Son. It is not the Son of the mother but the Son of God who has come for His bride. I have the privilege to counsel people for marriage. It has happened on more than one occasion when they will say to me "Let's plan the wedding ceremony" and we'll

talk about the reception and then they'll say "We've never seen a ceremony that you have done." So those that are concerned about how the ceremony might go and want to see one I'm doing, I'll invite to come to one. One couple who came to one had an interesting look on their face when I saw them toward the back. They felt it was a ceremony that honored the Lord and enjoyed the reception but I noticed there was something different. Their look was one of "Isn't this nice, but wait till you see ours."

I think that is what Jesus is doing. He is at that marriage feast and He is looking beyond it. He'll go to the cross and because of that He'll secure a bride. There will be a marriage feast for the Lamb and the bride of the Lamb that is glorious. I want to show you this in Isaiah 25 where it begins to anticipate that. It is also in Isaiah 54 but I just want to show you the Isaiah 25 passage now. Where are God's wonderful things going to be done? Isaiah 25:6-9 says

[6] On this mountain 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. [7] And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. [8] He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken. [9] It will be said on that day, "Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation."

They are saying here is the mountain where the Lord will go at the hour and He will win the victory. He will defeat sin and death and then spread out for His bride a marriage feast that is full of all that nourishes. It is full of the wine of gladness and the joy of salvation. It is on that day that the Lord Himself, the Son (not of Mary) of God who will come through Mary, will go there. The relentless, obedient Son has now left His mother and will cleave to His bride and the obedient Son will do the will of His Father. It was at His baptism that His Father said "This is My Son in whom I am well pleased." It was that Father who He had left to come and purchase a bride at the hour of His redemption at the cross.

It is just like in the days when Jacob is sent to a far country to purchase his bride, Jesus has come from the heavens, the Son of God, Son of Man, where His earthly father and mother has done their job and then it is announced that this is the Son of God to the world at His baptism. He goes into the temptation and now the first miracle is His declaration. I left My Father, I leave these My earthly parents and now I am the relentless Son of God who will be obedient to death on the cross to bring the New and do away with the Old. That is exactly revealing His glory as the relentless Son of God who has come to save His people from their sins.

It is anticipating what? Let's look at Revelation 19. Here is what it anticipates. Revelation 19:6-9 says

[6] Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. [7] Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; [8] it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure"—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. [9] And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God."

That's where Jesus is looking at this marriage feast. The one that He fulfills in Isaiah 25 at the cross He secures and then He will establish it. As the relentless obedient Son of God He does this miracle not simply for His earthly mother's concern but says "Woman (respectful but now distances Himself)" He now has come. The miracle was done in obedience to the Father to take Him to the cross for He is the relentless, obedient Son of God. Jesus says "I have come to do the will of My Father and all whom He has given Me, I lose not one but will raise them up on the last day."

Secondly, He is the all-providing Lord of the feast. He takes the wine and gives it to the lord of the feast and He is saying "I am the Lord of the feast. I will provide wine that shall never fail." He is looking at the shedding of His blood. This Lord of the feast will even give you a supper to come to, to anticipate the day of the marriage feast of the Lamb. His people at the Lord's Supper will remember the blood poured out as they drink of the fruit of the vine. They will remember the body that was given as the obedient Son. He says "I am the Lord of the feast. Those whom I invite, I'll lose not one and all that I provide will never run out for it is unending and forever. I have brought you life forever." The wine of His stone jars that He has filled up with His blood is unending and unfathomable. No one will be put to shame and those invited will never be disappointed. He is the Lord of the feast who provides all that is necessary.

Thirdly, He takes those baptismal waters from the stone jar and says "I am the Baptizer." Those stone jars are done away with for this One will baptize with His Spirit as He pours out His Spirit upon His people and seals them. I've done away with those waters of baptism anticipating when I go to the cross. From the cross I will baptize you with the Spirit of God and empower you and keep you. I will pour out My Spirit upon you and I will baptize you with the blood as He sprinkles clean His bride with the blood to make her clean and she is forgiven. He pours forth His Spirit and sprinkles her clean with His blood for He is the Baptizer. All of that in the Old Covenant is obsolete and in the New Covenant it's glorious. He pours forth not water that must be replaced time and time again but His Spirit who will abide with you. He pours forth His blood by which through His death He has

done an atonement and the Son of God relentlessly becomes the Lamb of God and now provides for you the blood that saves you as He sprinkles you clean. Finally, He is the incomparable Bridegroom of the bride. He will provide a wine and His wine, the New Wine is better than the old wine for it makes glad the heart of His people for He has secured them. See the Bridegroom for He has come to lay down His life for His bride. He has gone to the far country not to give money but to give Himself a new purchaser and you His bride. Husbands love your wives as Christ loves the church and gave Himself up for Her at that hour. There at this marriage feast He is saying with gratefulness for any bridegroom here, "I am the Bridegroom who will cover My bride not with shame but with glory and I will wash her with the water of the Word." The cross secures all this.

At this time when He does this miracle, the death bell strikes for His hour, while it reveals His glory and strengthens the faith of His disciples for it will go to the hour where He will be at the cross and then there will be His mother and again at the cross she'll hear that word. "Woman, behold your son, son, behold your mother." The obedient Son of God cares for all from His mother to all and from the cross will provide even as she feels the sword Simeon said would pierce her heart and her soul. Praise the Lord for the mother who hears those words from her son, who began to distance Himself from this miracle to be obedient to His Father but when He gets to that hour as He speaks to her again the distance will grow between Him and His Father.

"Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34 ESV) It is there the obedient Son is cast from the presence of His Father to save us from our sins. There He secures for us a marriage feast that is forever. There He secures for His people the Spirit of God at that cross and the blood that redeems us. There the Bridegroom does His work. Husbands love your wives as Christ loves the church and gave Himself for Her that He might wash her with the water of His Word and one day He will present her to Himself glorious, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. Come to the Son who is the Lamb who purchases His bride and washes her clean with His blood. See His glory for the Old is gone, the New has come. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together in this Your Word. Thank You Father for the privilege to examine it, embrace it and see it. There maybe those reading this today who came looking for glory because You moved them. May they see it in Jesus. May the faltering words and inability of a preacher be removed and may Your Spirit open their eyes to see the One who can take the Old of death and sin and bring them to the New to life and His cross that has secured it. Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to the cross I cling. Father, for those who are in the despair of skepticism, criticism, anger, disappointment and all of the things in chaos that sin brings, would You this day tell them that there is hope. It is sure but it is singular. It is Christ alone and may

they flee to Him. For those whom You have saved may this day they see the glory of their Savior, the relentless Son of God who performed a miracle to send Him to the cross to establish a feast for them and swallows up death and sin, as the Lord of the feast providing, as the Baptizer of His people He will secure them and wash them clean. As the Bridegroom He is coming from His chamber, looking for His bride and we shall rise to meet Him. Come quickly Jesus I pray, Amen.

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