

JESUS BLESSES THE WEDDING IN CANA

John 2:1-11, Key Verse: 2:11

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“This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.”

In the last passage we heard Jesus’ invitation to his disciples, “Come and see.” Though Jesus is the eternal Creator God, he invites us to come to him freely. Jesus wants to spend time with us until we see that he is the Savior of the world. Jesus wants us to see the kingdom of God, our eternal home. Jesus wants us to discover ourselves in God, based on God’s great hope for us. Jesus’ words, “Come and see,” promise that when we seek Jesus sincerely, we will meet the Savior God. When we have Jesus, we have everything.

In today’s passage Jesus performs a miraculous sign. It is the first among seven that are recorded in John’s gospel. Of course, Jesus performed countless miracles while on earth. But John chose seven of them, which he calls “miraculous signs” and relates them in a progression that fully reveals the glory of Jesus. Each miraculous sign teaches us something more about Jesus. This first miraculous sign reveals Jesus’ transforming power. Jesus changed wash water into choice wine. Jesus changes dirty sinners into holy saints. Jesus blesses mankind with true joy. May God help us to grasp the spiritual meaning of Jesus’ first miraculous sign and hold it in our hearts.

First, Mary’s prayer (1-3).

Look at verses 1-2. “On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus’ mother was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding.” Jesus and his new disciples traveled from Judea to Cana in Galilee, where there was a wedding. In Jewish society, a wedding was celebrated by the entire community. Young and old, rich and poor, wise and simple—everyone came together to bless a wedding. The newlyweds were treated like a prince and princess. They were accorded seats of honor and received everyone’s blessing and congratulations. The celebration could last for several days. During that time, the newlyweds were expected to entertain their guests with good hospitality. A wedding that was well done was the social event of the season. It established the bride and groom as persons to be respected in their society. In the hard reality of daily life in Israel, these kinds of weddings were a source of happiness and joy.

John notes that Jesus’ mother was there. It is interesting that John always calls her “Jesus’ mother.” Not once in his gospel does he call her “Mary,” as Luke does. It seems that in John’s heart, the grace of Jesus’ incarnation was always there. The fact that the eternal Creator God took on human flesh and was born of a woman was primary to him. So he always called her “Jesus’ mother.” However, in the community where she lived, she was respected in her own right. She was a person who could not be missed as a wedding guest. Jesus was also invited, as were his new disciples, including Peter, John, Andrew, Philip and Nathanael. We can imagine how happy the disciples were to be at a wedding feast with much food and drink.

However, a problem arose. The wine ran out. This was a serious breach of hospitality. It could haunt the married couple as long as they lived. In that close-knit community there would always be someone who remembered this and talked about it. Jesus’ mother noticed this problem. She did not talk about it to others with a critical mind. She understood the newlywed couple with a shepherd’s mind. She really wanted to help them. She made this problem her own. Then she brought it to Jesus, just as it was, saying, “They have no more wine.” There is no shortage of problems. We all have problems. And our Bible students have problems. But how we handle our problems is important. We learn from Mary to bring the problem to Jesus in prayer.

Dr. Isaac Baek ran into a problem when he lost his job at the Argonne National Lab. Not only was he unemployed, but he faced a visa problem. It was complicated and difficult to solve; it seemed inevitable that he and his family

would return to Korea. But Mother Barry made the problem her own and brought it to Jesus in prayer. For a while, nothing seemed to happen. Dr. Baek had to take some very humble jobs, not proper for a Ph.D. of his stature. Moreover, he was on the verge of being deported. Then, after much prayer by many coworkers, two positions opened. One was at Michigan State University and the other was with a small company in the Chicago area. It turns out that they were competing for the same national grant. With spiritual insight, Mother Barry advised Dr. Baek to take the job with the smaller company. After a successful observation period, this company hired him with a decent salary and applied for his visa. Last week, by the grace of God, Dr. Baek received a visa. It is a miracle. His family can stay in the USA as a missionary family. This happened when a mother of prayer brought the problem to Jesus just as it was. We must bring our problems to Jesus.

Second, Jesus said, “Dear woman, my time has not yet come” (4-5).

Look at Jesus’ answer in verse 4. “Dear woman, why do you involve me? My time has not yet come.” Jesus did not call her “Mom.” Jesus called her “Dear woman.” It is really a beautiful expression. Jesus loved his mother dearly, so he called her “dear.” At the same time, Jesus addressed her on the basis of their spiritual, not human, relationship. Since being introduced as the Messiah, Jesus began his public ministry. That marked a transition in his life and in all of his relationships. Before, he had been a good and obedient son. Now he had to give first priority to God’s mission. Still, Jesus respected his mother as “the woman” through whom the Messiah came. Jesus respected his mother on the basis of her mission from God. Second-generation missionaries can learn from Jesus. Instead of calling their parents “Dad,” or “Mom,” all the time, they can sometimes call them “shepherd” or “dear servant of God.” Dr. Samuel Lee’s children often called him “Shepherd.” There is true and universal respect in the holy mission from God.

By the same token, Mary respected Jesus on the basis of his mission as the Messiah. Of course, she wanted Jesus to do something miraculous to help the newlywed couple. But she did not push him humanly, saying, “Oh please Jesus. Remember how I suffered in the pains of childbirth for you. Can’t you do this one thing for me?” She did not nag Jesus. She brought the problem to him, and then trusted him to handle it according to his own judgment and decision. Mary respected Jesus as the Messiah. Parents of second-gens should not just push their children with parental authority. We must respect those who have received God’s holy mission and see them in God.

Then Jesus said, “My time has not yet come.” Jesus indicated that he was living according to God’s time schedule. He was not free to do as he pleased. He had to keep God’s holy mission foremost in his mind and heart. He could not exercise his Messianic power at random. He had to use his Messianic power according to God’s will. When he said, “My time has not yet come,” he was not saying “no.” But he was submitting Mary’s request to God’s will and time schedule. Those who live with God’s holy mission must give their first priority to God. They are not free to satisfy their human desires or the demands of their families. They must submit every request to the will of God and his time schedule.

Mary understood the heart of Jesus. She perceived that he would not ignore her request, for it was made by her faith in God and by her faith in the Messiah. She had an expectation that comes from faith. So she said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.” Her words made a deep impression on the servants and prepared them to obey Jesus. In this way, Mary created an environment of faith and obedience. After bringing the problem to Jesus in prayer, we must do what we can to make an environment for Jesus to work in.

Third, the servants’ obedience (6-10).

Look at verse 6. “Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.” In those days there was no indoor plumbing. Water had to be drawn from a well and carried into the house, where it was stored in stone jars. To serve a wedding for the whole community, much water was required. These jars had most likely been filled once and then emptied as all the invited guests washed their hands and feet.

Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water." To human reason, this request did not make sense. It seemed to have nothing to do with the no-wine problem. Moreover, it was hard work. Many trips to the well and back would have to be made. There were many other demands on the servants' time. But what did they do? Verse 7b says, "...so they filled them to the brim." They not only filled the jars, but they filled them "to the brim." They did not fill them most of the way and then stop. They filled them to the brim. They obeyed Jesus' words wholeheartedly. They did what Jesus asked and even more. No doubt, when they started to obey Jesus' words, spiritual joy began to well up in their hearts. They realized that something great was going to happen. They transcended the world of reason and entered the world of faith. This mysterious grace comes to those who obey Jesus' words simply. This is the kind of obedience that Jesus uses and blesses greatly.

Recently, we saw many acts of obedience like this during the preparation of the MSU Conference. For example, a woman missionary and a Russian shepherdess volunteered to prepare and serve meals for the conference messengers during their time of training. These hostesses devoted themselves to the task of serving breakfast, lunch and dinner every day. The meals were always delicious. They were also nutritious and artistically arranged. The hostesses served joyfully, with love and prayer. They were like the servants who filled the jars of water to the brim. Like them, many hidden people worked hard to prepare the MSU Conference like the servants who filled the jars "to the brim." Through hidden people's labor, God blessed the MSU Conference abundantly.

When the servants tasted the joy of obedience, Jesus helped them step out further in faith. Look at verse 8. "Then he told them, 'Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet.' They did so...." One doesn't have to be a genius to realize that taking ceremonial wash water to the banquet master would offend him. The servants could be severely rebuked and even beaten. But they did not hesitate to obey Jesus' words. They trusted Jesus, drew some out, and took it to the master of the banquet. Verse 9 says that the water had been turned into wine. It was a miracle of Jesus, done through Mary's prayer and the obedience of the servants. It was an act of divine power that was done by the Messiah to bless the wedding. Jesus is the Creator God who can transform ordinary wash water into choice wine.

When the master of the banquet tasted the wine, his tongue began to dance in his mouth. It was the most delicious wine he ever had. So he called the bridegroom aside and 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." He testified to the miracle that Jesus had performed. And he complimented the bridegroom highly. Jesus turned what could have been a social disaster into a time of gracious praise for the bridegroom. How happy the newlyweds were. How happy all the guests were to enjoy the most delicious wine. But the most blessed people were the servants, who worked hard to draw water. They could see the power of God in Jesus.

Where Jesus is, there is the joy of heaven and overflowing blessing on mankind. But only those who trust Jesus and participate in his work can really understand where the source of blessing comes from. The USA is known as a blessed nation in many ways. So many people want to immigrate to the USA. But not many know why the USA has been blessed. It has been blessed through the Christian faith of many hidden people who love Jesus, pray for his work, and seek to obey the world mission command.

Recently, the Chinese government commissioned some people to find the secret of America's prosperity and success. After thorough scientific research, they concluded that the USA was blessed because of Christian faith. So they secretly began to encourage Christian faith in their country. At present there are over 90 million Christians in China. Soon, China will be a Christian nation. We must pray for the people of North Korea and Muslim countries to open their eyes to God's blessing. Where Jesus is, there is overflowing blessing on mankind.

Fourth, Jesus revealed his glory to his disciples (11).

Look at verse 11. "This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory and his disciples put their faith in him." Here we learn the fundamental reason why Jesus performed this miraculous sign. It was to plant faith in his disciples. Of course, they had already confessed Jesus to be the Messiah. But when they saw him turn ceremonial wash water into choice wine, they perceived his purpose in coming more

deeply and precisely. It was to transform his disciples from ordinary sinners into wonderful and holy saints who could be a blessing to others.

There are so many who have experienced the transforming power of Jesus. Missionary Moody Kim was recently hit on the back of his head by a robber with a heavy weapon. His wound was serious; it could have been fatal. But God spared his life. Yesterday, when God's servant visited him, he prayed for his assailant, "Father, forgive him, he did not know what he was doing." And he thanked God deeply for sparing his life. He has the gracious image of our Lord Jesus Christ. Shepherdess Jenny Cook was once a Charlie's Angels candidate. But she met Jesus through one-to-one Bible study. She has become the most sweet mother of prayer and a holy influence to UIC students. Through her patient and prayerful shepherding and one-to-one Bible study, Mario and Angelina Avila established a blessed house church in God yesterday. In her sorrow, Shepherdess Angela Fitch was once a candidate for an Olympic gold medal in the "weep and scratch." But she met Jesus through one-to-one Bible study. She was transformed into the most gracious and considerate mother of prayer. Whoever spends time with her can feel that Jesus is living. Her husband, Shepherd Tim Fitch, has become a spirited and visionary fellowship leader. Jesus wants us to see the evidence of his transforming power and put our faith in him. Jesus will change each of us in the inner person to be a holy saint with a sweet and gracious image. Jesus will change many young people of our nation into missionary candidates and blessings to the world. Let's put our faith in Jesus and obey his word wholeheartedly. Let's learn to pray with faith that Jesus changes ordinary sinners into holy saints.