

Jesus Reveals His Glory

John 2:1-11

Key Verse: 2:11

“What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.”

In chapter 1, Jesus' first disciples encountered Jesus and confessed he was the Messiah. In chapter 2, Jesus taught them what he would do as the Messiah through his first miraculous sign. John records seven of Jesus' signs in his gospel. Each sign points to Jesus and teaches us who he is and why he came. Jesus' first sign, changing water into wine, tells us the nature of his Messianic ministry: Jesus can transform people, whose lives are drab and meaningless, into tasty people who are useful to God and blessings to others. Many people are not satisfied with their lives and think negatively about themselves. It is because they repeat bad habits. They know they should change and improve. So they try, but fail, like computers which return to the default settings. They say that the average American tries ten different diets during their lifetime. But they fail to look like a movie star and feel fatalistic about themselves. The problem is not the diet program, but the person. Some people really want to have good relationships with others and make many friends. But because of a character flaw they end up driving people away sooner or later. Some people really want to be hardworking and diligent. They seem to do well for a few days. But inevitably they fall into laziness. Can we really be changed? Yes! With man this is impossible, but not with God. All things are possible with God (Mk 10:27). In today's passage let's learn Jesus' transforming power. Jesus' first sign was not done in a vacuum; it was done during a wedding ceremony and involved other people: his mother, and servants. It also had a great impact on his disciples. Let's think about this event in terms of relationships: Jesus and his mother, Jesus and the servants, Jesus and his disciples.

First, Jesus and his mother (1-5). On the third day after Jesus met Nathanael, on a bright, sunny morning, a beautiful wedding took place in the small town of Cana in Galilee. For the people of that region, it was a most joyful occasion. They celebrated weddings for a whole week, treating the bride and bridegroom like a king and queen. People did their best to make a joyful environment, forgetting for the time being their suffering under Roman oppression. Jesus' mother was there. She appears to be a woman of some influence, and a kind of co-hostess for the event. Jesus and his disciples were invited as guests (1-2). It was good news to the hungry disciples. Peter's mouth was watering as he thought about the delicious food. Andrew brought a take-home box for leftovers. Philip calculated the cost of

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the wedding. And Nathanael appreciated the sincerity of the bride and groom. The atmosphere of the wedding was full of joy. Weddings are important. The Bible begins with a wedding in Genesis 2, and ends with the wedding supper of the Lamb in Revelation 19:7-9. The Bible compares our relationship with Jesus to that of bride and bridegroom. The fact that Jesus attended this wedding has deep meaning. Jesus had just begun his Messianic ministry and he was very busy. But he took time out to bless this wedding. This means that Christian life is not ascetic - a matter of keeping rules and regulations - but it is joyful like a wedding.

In the midst of the joyful wedding, a serious problem arose. The wine was gone. We don't know why the wine ran out. Maybe the wedding planners underestimated the disciples' drinking capacity. Wine is essential for a wedding feast because it helps people to be joyful. Psalm 104:15 says, **"...wine that gladdens human hearts."** Yet the Bible also warns that drinking wine causes woe, sorrow, strife, complaints, and in the end it bites like a snake and poisons like a viper (Pr 23:29-35). Still, in this context, it should be understood as contributing to the joy of the wedding. But it ran out. People want to believe that worldly joy and pleasure will last forever. But it always ends and the joy disappears. So it was in this case. Running out of wine was about to ruin the wedding mood. In that culture, it was a breach of hospitality - a serious offense against the guests. It was humiliating for the bride and groom. At this critical moment, Jesus' mother discovered the problem. She did not blame anyone. She brought the problem to Jesus, saying, **"They have no more wine."**

Here we can learn from Mary about bringing problems to Jesus. In our ministry, and in our society, we can find many serious problems and blame others. We often react to symptoms without seeing what the root problem is. We need to look through the symptoms to see the real problem. What could be the desperate need of our time? The prophet Amos foretold, **"The days are coming," declares the Sovereign Lord, 'when I will send a famine through the land – not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the Lord. People will stagger from sea to sea and wander from north to east, searching for the word of the Lord, but they will not find it. In that day the lovely young women and strong young men will faint because of thirst.'**" (Amos 8:11-13) These days many people suffer from spiritual famine. In the midst of material abundance and technological advances, they are weary and tired without the word of God in their souls. They have no more wine of God's word. We need to discover this problem and bring it to Jesus.

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What happened when Mary brought the problem to Jesus? Jesus said, **“Woman, why do you involve me? My hour has not yet come”** (4). Here the word “woman” is not in any way rude or insensitive, but was a polite way of addressing a woman. Jesus spoke to her as the Messiah, not as a son to his mother. The words, **“My hour has not yet come”** introduce a theme of Jesus’ time in John’s gospel, which climaxes with Jesus’ death on the cross according to God’s salvation plan. Jesus lived according to God’s time for him. He did not react according to people’s requests, but followed God’s time to reveal his glory as the Messiah, the Son of God. Jesus seems to say that he is not going to help Mary. But Mary took Jesus’ words positively. She fully trusted him. She believed that Jesus would work in his time and quietly waited on him. Usually when we pray we expect an immediate answer according to our own time and in our own way. We expect that God should do what we want. But God makes it clear to us that we don’t control him. Surely God loves us and answers our prayers, but he does so in his time and in his way and for our ultimate good, like parents do for their children. So we should trust God and wait without doubting or complaining. God surely hears our prayers. 1 John 5:14 says, “This is the confidence we have in approaching God; that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.”

Waiting on God does not mean sitting down and doing nothing. Verse 5 says, **“His mother said to the servants, ‘Do whatever he tells you.’”** Mary used her influence to create an environment in which Jesus could work. She understood that Jesus works through those who obey him. God uses obedient people, not rebellious people. Through Mary’s good influence, the servants fully trusted Jesus and were ready to do whatever he told them. Expectantly preparing the environment for Jesus’ work is important. Let’s see how Jesus responded to Mary’s request.

Second, Jesus and the servants (6-10). Jesus went right to work. Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing (6). In total they could hold 120-180 gallons of water, equivalent to about sixty large buckets. Jesus said to the servants, **“Fill the jars with water”** (7a). This task seemed unrelated to the problem at hand. They needed wine, not water. Sometimes God works in mysterious ways, beyond our reason, common sense or knowledge. Isaiah 55:9 says, **“As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”** Many people are unwilling to obey what they do not understand. But we cannot confine God to our human reason. That is why we need to trust God fully and train ourselves to take captive every thought and make it obedient to Christ (2 Cor 10:5). There were

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many reasons for the servants not to obey, but they obeyed anyway. “They filled the jars to the brim” (7b). This indicates that they obeyed wholeheartedly and willingly. They did not feel burdened by Jesus' command, because they trusted Jesus. “Then Jesus told them, ‘Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet’” (8a). This word challenged the servants to trust in Jesus more. When we begin to trust God, he challenges us to trust him more. God wants to develop our trust relationship with him fully. For example, God challenged Abraham to the point of offering his only son Isaac to God as a sacrifice. This command seemed to be very unreasonable. But Abraham obeyed, because he trusted God fully. His trust in God was unshakable. Based on this trust, God swore by himself to make Abraham a blessing to the whole world. Through this promise God sent his one and only Son as the Savior of the world. Here we learn that obedience to God comes from trust in God (Ro 1:5).

These days the word “obedience” is unpopular, especially with young people. Those who obey are characterized as weak and foolish, while those who have a rebellious spirit seem to be cool and strong. Many young people intentionally try to be rebellious. They think that if they obey someone they will lose their own identity and individuality. But the Bible teaches us that obedience is very important. Those who obey God are truly wise and courageous people, and the most blessed. For example, when Noah was warned that a flood judgment was coming, and was commanded to build a huge ark, he obeyed with holy fear (Heb 11:7). To people, he looked foolish; so they dismissed him as out of touch. But to God, he was very wise and courageous. Through this one man of obedience, God brought salvation to his family and preserved the human race.

The obedience of the servants in this passage reflects the obedience of Jesus himself. Jesus' life was characterized by obedience. In his early years he obeyed his parents. Jesus' ministry was an exact obedience to the Father in heaven. Although he was the Son of God, he obeyed God to death - even death on a cross (Php 2:8). Jesus' cross was the cross of obedience. Obedience does not come naturally, but is learned. Even Jesus experienced this. Hebrews 5:8-9 says, “**Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.**” As disciples of Jesus, we, too, must learn and teach obedience. Jesus said, “**...teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you**” (Mt 28:20a). Without learning obedience we cannot experience God's blessing. Let's learn obedience!

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What happened when the servants obeyed Jesus? The master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine (9a). Then 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”** (10). This tells us that the wine that Jesus made was the best. Because of this wine the joy of the wedding banquet increased all the more. But the joy of the guests was only temporary, for they did not know where the wine came from. On the other hand, the servants who had drawn the water knew where it came from (9b). They experienced Jesus himself, the fountain of joy. They learned the secret of drawing joy from Jesus through trust that obeys.

Third, Jesus and his disciples (11). Apparently, while Jesus changed water into wine, the disciples did not do anything, in contrast to Mary and the servants. But the author John clearly tells us that this first sign had a great impact on them. Let’s read verse 11. **“What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.”** Here we find Jesus’ purpose in turning water into wine at the wedding. It was to reveal himself as the Messiah, especially to his disciples. He wanted them to know that he is the Son of God who has power to work miracles. He changed the very nature of a substance immediately by an act of will. Through him everything is possible - even the transformation of people into new creations. John emphasizes that the disciples **“believed in him.”** This does not indicate mere theological knowledge, but faith that Jesus could change each of them into new people. For example, Jesus had told Peter, **“You will be called Cephas.”** It meant that he would be changed from an ordinary fisherman into a most influential man of God in human history. Jesus revealed his glory to his disciples in order to help them grow in trust in him and commit themselves to him, like a tree putting down deep roots to grow and bear much fruit.

Like his disciples, we also need to believe that Jesus is the Messiah who can change us from useless people into useful people, and commit ourselves to him. The problem is that even though we know Jesus has changing power, we may not experience it practically in the way we expect. We want to change our bad habit or character flaws, and we try, but they are stronger than we expected. Sometimes we give up, thinking, “I will never change. Even Jesus cannot change me.” This negative thinking which comes from unbelief hinders Jesus' power from working in our lives. Jesus wants us to remove this unbelief, which may be deeply rooted in our hearts. For example, in John 11, Mary confessed that Jesus is the resurrection and the life. But when he told her to remove the stone from Lazarus’ tomb, she

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reacted strongly out of unbelief. She knew who Jesus was in her head, but did not have faith in her heart. Jesus said, **“Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?”** (Jn 11:40) Jesus wants us to believe in him from our hearts. This may require us to repent of our unbelief. Then Jesus can work powerfully to change us. Jesus’ power does not merely improve our condition, but changes us fundamentally. Changing water to wine is a change in the very nature of the substance. In the same way, when Jesus changes a person, he transforms the very nature of a person. There is no weakness, sinful desire, bad habit or character flaw that Jesus cannot change. Jesus can make anyone who believes in him into a new person. Paul said, “If anyone is in Christ he is a new creation, the old has gone, the new has come!” (2 Cor 5:17) Even though Jesus has transforming power, it does not work automatically in all people. It works only in those who trust in him and commit to him. Mary trusted Jesus in prayer. The servants trusted Jesus in obedience. His disciples trusted Jesus in response to his changing power. They all experienced the power of God through Jesus when they trusted him. When we learn trust in Jesus, then we can learn to trust one another. Trust in Jesus heals relationships between husband and wife, and between brothers and sisters in Christ. As we grow in trust in Jesus, eventually, we can build up a trust community. Let’s trust in Jesus and experience his changing power in our lives through prayer and obedience so that we may become useful people and a blessing to others. Amen.