

the QUIET collection



for Christmas

Day 9: Wonder

On the third day, there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. 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 20 or 30 gallons each. Jesus said to them, "Fill the water pots with water," so they filled them up to the brim. 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. When the people have drunk freely, then he serves the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now." This beginning of his signs Jesus did in Canaan of Galilee and manifested his glory. His disciples believed in him.

—John 2:10-11

This is the word of the Lord. It is absolutely true and given to us in love. They say this was the first miracle of Jesus, but that's only if you don't count his birth, the truest miracle of all, when the maker of the moon and stars, of mountain ridges and rushing rivers, of fields, and flowers, and fingernails, of every living thing came down to be with us, came down to be one of us, to join our human family, so that we could join his, a seed inside a woman, just like we were. So, maybe Cana was technically his second miracle. Still, of all the places I would look for a miracle, a wedding is last on the list. Maybe in a hospital room, or a war torn country, maybe at a homeless shelter, in an ambulance, an earthquake or a flood, maybe at the deathbed, but not at the wedding feast. I look for the miracle when I'm grabbing the end of the frayed rope, not when I'm celebrating the beginning of a new union.

Today, if we're honest, and aren't we too tired not to be, then maybe we would say that Christ the baby fits more naturally into the Christmas story than does Christ the man. But the whole point of the baby was the life of the man. When we look at the life of the man who was also God, we can't ignore the miracles. But why a wedding, and why water to wine? What does that have to do with Christmas? Those water pots aren't mentioned just to set the scene. Those six water pots were there ready for the Jewish custom of purification, the custom that had to be repeated over, and over, and over again. But Jesus was born just one time, and what he came to do he did once for all.

Jesus, the second Adam, came, as Colossians 1 says, as the image of the invisible God, by whom all things were created in Heaven and on Earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or rulers, or authorities. All things were created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him, all things hold together. Jesus, a guest at a wedding by the bidding of his mother told the servants to fill the water pots with water. It's all they could do, the only resource they had. Water didn't make any sense when they'd run out of wine, but he must have been kind, and he must have been trustworthy, because they did everything he said, just as Mary instructed.

When they drew the water and took it to the headwaiter, it was clear this was water no more. Wine, the best wine, filled those water pots to the brim. No one knew where the wine came from, but Jesus knew, his mother knew, and those servants, they absolutely knew. God, a woman, and a handful of servants, the only ones who knew about the miracle. The water, the old covenant, the wine, the new, the birth of Jesus was the birth of the one who is the beginning, who was in the beginning and makes us okay once and for all. He holds all things together, even when it seems like they're falling apart. He doesn't pour out the old onto the ground to start all the way over. He takes the old and makes it all the way new. When the headwaiter tasted the water, which become wine, and did not know where it came from, but the servants who had drawn the water, they knew.