

## Why was water turned to wine?

Text: John 2:1-11 for 1/20/2019 by Pastor Bolwerk

*Three days later, there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee. Jesus' mother was there. <sup>2</sup>Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the wedding. <sup>3</sup>When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no wine." <sup>4</sup>Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does that have to do with you and me? My time has not come yet." <sup>5</sup>His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." <sup>6</sup>Six stone water jars, which the Jews used for ceremonial cleansing, were standing there, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. <sup>7</sup>Jesus told them, "Fill the jars with water." So they filled them to the brim. <sup>8</sup>Then he said to them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." And they did.*

*<sup>9</sup>When the master of the banquet tasted the water that had now become wine, he did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew). The master of the banquet called the bridegroom <sup>10</sup>and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and when the guests have had plenty to drink, then the cheaper wine. You saved the good wine until now!" <sup>11</sup>This, the beginning of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed in Cana of Galilee. He revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him.*

There are many things that God has done that may cause us to ask "Why?" Why did God put that Tree of Knowledge in the Garden of Eden if he didn't want Adam and Eve to eat from it? Why did God give so many civil laws and religious rules to the people of Israel when he knew they couldn't even keep the Ten Commandments? Why did God allow the devil onto the earth if he knew Satan was going to lead people into sin? Why did God create the duck-billed platypus?

With all of the things that you could ask God "Why?" about, this portion of scripture before us is probably not one that prompts that question. Most of us have heard about Jesus turning water into wine. Many of us have heard it enough that we could probably recite most of it by heart. But do we fully understand what is actually taking place here? To help us dig a little deeper into this portion of God's word we are going to start with that all-important question: "Why?"

Theme: Why was water turned to wine?

- I. To reveal glory.
- II. To strengthen faith.

As we look this miracle of Jesus, we want to focus in on some of the details that are important for our understanding Jesus' purpose for this miracle. These details are easy to overlook. The first detail is where the wedding took place. It took place in Cana. Cana was in northern Israel about seven miles north of Nazareth and about twenty miles west of the Sea of Galilee. Cana was just a little town; this is not a big city like Jerusalem or Capernaum. So as Jesus gets ready to perform his first miracle he is not someplace where many people are going to hear about it. The second detail that is important is who knew about the miracle. There were only a few people who did: Mary, the servants, and Jesus' disciples. We are told that the master of the banquet didn't know Jesus had turned water into wine. And scripture never says that the newlyweds or any of the guests ever knew that Jesus had done this. Jesus performs this miracle in such a way that only a few people know about it.

Now as for the miracle itself, it starts with Mary coming to Jesus and telling him the people hosting the wedding are out of wine. Jesus' response to his mother seems a little abrupt, "**Woman, what does that have to do with you and me?**" (v. 4). Jesus was not being rude, he simply wants his mother to realize he is now serving God in the public office of Savior. As Savior, Jesus was there to serve people's spiritual needs. Mary was asking Jesus to help with a physical need. Yet, Jesus doesn't say he will not help. Instead, our Lord uses this opportunity to address a spiritual need.

So Mary leaves things up to Jesus as to how he's going to handle this situation. She says to the servants, "**Do whatever he tells you**" (v. 5). Jesus tells the servants to fill some large water jars with plain water. Finally, Jesus says to the servants, "**Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet**" (v. 8). Here is where it is easy to miss something important. Notice what Jesus does *not* do. He does not wave his hands over the jars. He doesn't speak a special prayer over the water. There are no showy special effects: the jars don't glow or sparkle. Jesus simply says to fill

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the jars with water and then draw out some water. We don't even know when the miracle takes place. Did the water turn to wine in the jars? Did it turn to wine as it was being drawn out, or as it was being carried into the wedding banquet? We don't know. All we know is that when it reached the lips of the master of the banquet it was the best wine he had ever tasted.

So why, in this very inconspicuous way, was water turned to wine? John writes, **“This, the beginning of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed in Cana of Galilee. He revealed his glory”** (v. 11). This miracle was not one to bring Jesus glory; it was done to reveal his glory. Jesus was showing how he is the Savior God had promised. Christ was displaying his glory, that is, he was showing he had the power to serve the world as Savior.

When we see that power and glory of Jesus, we can easily misunderstand it. We hear of Jesus' “glory” and we think of the honor and praise Christ receives from others. Jesus certainly deserves that kind of glory, yet our sinful minds can easily twist things around. We begin thinking that because we are connected to Jesus by faith that we should receive some of Christ's glory. That makes sense to our minds. We could even justify this from scripture because doesn't the Bible say we are sons and daughters of the Almighty God? The Apostle Peter call believers a “royal priesthood” (1Peter 2:9). If we are royalty, then shouldn't we be treated as such? As Christians are we not deserving of the same honor and respect as Christ, especially since it is his holiness, his glory, that covers us?

If we are thinking that, as followers of Jesus, we are somehow deserving of honor and respect from this world, we are sadly mistaken. We are misunderstanding Jesus' glory, and we need to admit our own selfishness. Jesus' glory was never meant to bring us glory in this world. In fact because we are connected to Christ by faith the exact opposite is true. Jesus said, **“If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also”** (John 15:20), and **“All men will hate you because of me”** (Luke 21:17). That doesn't sound so glorious, does it? But this is not about worldly glory. Jesus did not come to gain worldly praise for himself or us. He came to display his glory. Yet even as he displays his power as true God, he is humble, he is not self-seeking. If you want to see Christ's greatest glory in this world then you have to look at his suffering and death. Scripture says of Jesus that **“He humbled himself and became obedient to death— even death on a cross”** (Philippians 2:8). Christ humbly displayed his glory as he hung on a cross paying for our selfishness; paying for our desire for worldly glory. How blessed we are because Jesus used his power, not to gain worldly glory for himself, but to save us from sin and hell. Why was water turned to wine? To reveal glory: Jesus' glory.

When you think of all of the miracles of Jesus, this miracle at Cana is usually not considered one of Jesus' “greater” miracles. It's not as attention grabbing as the feeding of the 5000 people or Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. Yet, we don't want to rate Jesus' miracles as if some were more important than others. Our Savior used his miracles as a part of his ministry, and Jesus' ministry was all about taking care of people's souls. Jesus did not perform miracles just so people could say, “Wow, what incredible power he has!” Jesus always used his miracles in connection with the spiritual well-being of others. So, why was water turned to wine? To strengthen faith.

Jesus was working to strengthen faith, even though the last sentence of our text might sound otherwise. The last sentence reads, **“He revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him”** (v. 11b). It says the disciples “believed in him.” This doesn't mean they were just coming to faith. No, these men already had faith in Jesus. Some of those men were there when John the Baptist said of Jesus, **“Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”** (John 1:29). The disciples who heard John say this trusted Jesus enough to start following him. They trusted in Jesus enough to give up their jobs, to give up everything they had, and become his students. These men had faith.

Jesus wants to make sure that not only was is their faith strong, but that it continues to grow stronger. Jesus uses this miracle of turning water into wine to strengthen his disciple's faith. He does that by showing his followers the power he has over creation. Yet as Jesus displays this

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tremendous power, he also showing the disciples his humility. The Savior is setting an example for his disciples to follow: Serving others as they rely on the power of God to carry out that service. And as they do so they are to serve humbly, not calling attention to themselves, but instead revealing God's glory.

This miracle is not just for the disciples. Christ uses this miracle to strengthen our faith too. Jesus knows you have faith. And our Lord not only wants your faith to remain strong, he wants your faith to grow even stronger. So he shows us his power, the power he has over this world to change things. In that power we see that Jesus has what it takes to change us. He has the power to change us from spiritually dead to spiritually alive. He has the power to change our hearts and lives. He has the power to turn us away from our sinful habits and desires and turn us toward a life pleasing to God. Our Lord has the power to not only free us from our sins, he has the power to make us new and holy in his sight. Christ has the power to give us what we need, both for our bodies and our souls.

Like his disciples, Jesus sets for us an example to follow: The example of his humility. By faith we want to live our lives quietly, humbly working to reveal Christ's glory. We quietly reveal Jesus' glory, so that those who do not yet believe in him can come to faith. We humbly display Jesus' glory to that those who do trust in him may be strengthened in their faith.

We don't want to live our lives striving for worldly popularity or fame. Instead we strive to reflect our Savior and his glory. We gratefully serve him just as he served us – not in flashy, attention getting ways, but in simple, quiet ways that help to fill the needs of others, especially their need for forgiveness. We live our lives of faith as a way of thanking the One who used his power and glory to free us from our sins, so that we can share in his eternal glory.

Now you know why. When you hear of Jesus miracle of changing water into wine don't just think of a wedding banquet; don't just think of it as a nice gesture on Jesus' part. Jesus was not just caring of someone's physical need. Our Lord was quietly working to help people with their greatest spiritual need. Our Savior changed water into wine to help assure us that he is the One with the power to save us from all of our sins, and that is exactly what he would go on to do. Amen.