



SERMON TITLE: Signs
SCRIPTURE: John 2:1-12

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"These things are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ" (John 20:31). This is how John concludes his own biography of Jesus. He wanted the young, the old, the sick, the well, the despairing, the hopeful, the skeptics, the faithful, and whoever reads his account of Jesus to believe and trust Him more fully. But what did John want them to believe? He wanted them to believe that Jesus alone brought eternal life into the present, broken world. And for all who enter this eternal life with God right now, we—like John—are exiles. For all who enter a relationship with Jesus, we will very likely be marginalized and dismissed because we follow Him. So, what does it mean to believe? And how do we mature in believing? What does it mean to remain faithful to God when the pressure is on? These are the things that John will help us explore by showing us the glory and beauty of Jesus.

There are many false notions about Christianity and it's sad to say that many people are rejecting it for the wrong reasons. I've talked to people who are turned off by Christianity and when I ask them to tell me what their biggest objections are, I usually can respond: "Well, if that's what Christianity is about, that would turn me off too. What you just described is not at all what Jesus is about; in fact, I'm sure he would be turned off by those things as well." And talking about false notions, one thing I've heard people say goes something like this: "*You know, I grew up going to church, but now I'm into my friends, my school, my career and honestly, I just like having a good time.*" Ever hear anything like that? The false idea is "God is a cosmic killjoy and a life of following Jesus is boring, unsatisfying, unfulfilling, and lifeless. Nothing could be further from the truth and the story we're going to read and study today shows us this. Jesus came to bring life, not take it. In John 10:10 Jesus said, "I came that you might have life and have it abundantly." And this story of Jesus turning water into wine is like an acted out parable to make that point.

READ 2:1-11—To understand this story, we have to understand what John means by "sign" and how he uses "signs" in his biography of Jesus. Look at v11 again. John tells us that this is the *first sign*—(there are six more for a total of seven)—that shows us Jesus' "glory"—that shows us *who Jesus is, what he came to do, what he offers, and how we can receive it*. So this miracle is not just a miracle. It's a sign that helps us understand who Jesus is and what he came to do.

One of my favorite all-time movies is the movie *Signs* with Mel Gibson and Joaquin Phoenix. It came out in 2002. M. Night Shyamalan wrote and directed the movie and it opened to rave reviews. I've probably watched it 4-5 times and every time I watch it I see something I didn't see before. That's because it's a story on two levels. *On the surface level*, it's a scary, sci-fi thriller about crop circles and an alien invasion. *But on a deeper level*, it's a story about a pastor who *loses his faith* and leaves the ministry after his wife dies in a tragic car accident. And, how he ultimately *regains his faith* as he comes to see that all around him, *in very common ways*, there are "*signs*" of God's love and care in the midst of his deepest pain and fears. There are "*signs*" that life is not just a series of *random, meaningless coincidences*, but below the surface of everything that's happening, God is always present and active in our lives even in the most tragic circumstances. John's seven signs are like this. On a surface level there's a simple story that anyone can understand and retell. However, under the simple story, there's a *deeper message with a deeper meaning* about Jesus that John wants us to see. Jesus' *first sign* at this wedding in Cana shows us something about Jesus and what he offers us that is really quite amazing. *So let's look at this story on two levels. We'll start with the simple, surface-level story first.*

The Simple Story — Jesus, his mother, his brothers and sisters, and his first five disciples go to a wedding in Cana of Galilee. In the midst of the feast and festivities, Jesus' mother Mary (the wedding coordinator?) hears that they've run out of wine. She goes to Jesus and says, "They've run out of wine, do something." To which Jesus replies: "Woman, what does this have to do with me. My hour has not yet come." Okay? What's that about? I'm sure Mary doesn't know either. She probably thought: "Okay, he's going to handle his in his own way and for his own reasons." So, she turns to the servants and says, "Do whatever he tells you to do." Jesus sees six large ceremonial wash pots and tells the servants to fill the pots to the brim with water which they do. Then he says draw the water out and take it to the master of the feast. He tastes the wine and says, "Oh my goodness, this is unheard of. You have saved the best wine for last." And this was a cause for even greater joy and celebration. And John adds, "Jesus' disciples saw his glory and they believed in him."

That's the simple, surface-level story, but again, John says this miracle was a sign, the first sign that shows us Jesus' glory—the first sign that encourages us to believe in Jesus—to trust in him in such a way that our faith in him shapes all of who we are and what we

do. So the question is: How does the “sign” of Jesus turning water into wine help us *believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God*. After all, that’s why John records these 7 signs. Remember 20:31. John tells us at the end of this book that everything he’s written was recorded so that *we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing we might have life in his name.* Again, *Jesus came to bring life, not take it. So what do we find in this simple story that encourages us to believe? What do you see here that shows us that Jesus came to give us life, not take it?*

The Deeper Meaning — To understand the deeper meaning, you’ve got to understand two things. ... (1) You’ve got to understand the rich, biblical symbolism of wine. In the Bible, especially in the prophetic literature, wine represents abundance, joy, shalom, hope, and the new creation of the Messianic kingdom. Read Isaiah 25:6-9. I have no doubt that Jesus had this passage in mind that day in the mountains of Cana, at that wedding feast. In this inaugural sign, the true Lord of the Feast provides his friends with 180 gallons of “aged wine well-refined.” Messiah Jesus has come to this feast and he works a miracle that points to something much greater coming in the future—the great Messianic feast that will come when God’s Kingdom is established on earth. And Jesus’ disciples see his glory in all this and they say, “This is our God, the one we’ve waited for, that he might save us. Let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.” And they believed in him. But there’s something else you need to understand. (2) You’ve got to understand what Jesus meant by the cryptic statement, “My hour has not yet come.” That statement is the key to understanding the sign and really, the whole passage. In the Gospels, whenever Jesus talks about *his hour (or his time)* it is always in reference to his coming death.

So this is what he says here (although I’m quite sure Mary couldn’t make any sense of it). When Mary comes up to him and says, “This is terrible, they’ve run out of wine. Do something.” Jesus responds, “Woman, it’s not my time to die yet.”—???— Tim Keller says that Jesus is at his friend’s wedding but he’s thinking about his own wedding. What wedding? Revelation 21—The Marriage Feast of the Lamb--“And I saw the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming out of heaven, prepared as a bride, beautifully dressed for her husband, and I heard a voice, ‘Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding feast of the Lamb.’” But why does he say, “It’s not my time to die?” Because he knows that before he can take us as his bride he will have to die to make us ready. Edmond Clowney put it this way: “Jesus sat amidst all the joy sipping the coming sorrow, so that you and I can sit amidst all this world’s sorrow, sipping the coming joy.” Wow, what a story—a simple story with a deeper meaning pointing us to greater things to come.

The simple application is this—Jesus came to bring life into every kind of situation we face. The fact that his very first miracle/sign took place at a friend’s wedding shows us that *the Creator God, the Lamb of God, the Son of God, the Messiah/the King of Israel* brings life into *everyday* life—into every part of your life. Don’t ever think that there’s anything too small to bring to him. This simple story tells us that when Jesus comes into your life he cares about everything you care about. The deeper application is this—one more time— At the wedding in Cana, Jesus sat at in the midst of joy and celebration sipping the coming sorrow so you and I could sit in the midst of this sorrow-filled world sipping the coming joy. Jesus willingly laid down his life for you so he could have life and have it abundantly. This is who Jesus really is so now the question is: What are you going to do with him?

Discussion Starters:

- Some stories have two levels of meaning. Charlie gave us an example from the movie Signs. Anybody seen it? What were your impressions of the movie? What other movies or stories or examples do you know of that would show a deeper level of meaning in one simple story?
- Review all the ways John has talked about Jesus so far. According to John chapter 1, who is Jesus? What hints do you find in chapter 1 about what Jesus has come to do.
- If you could have chosen Jesus’ first miracle what miracle would you have chosen for him?
- Have someone tell the simple, surface level story. Tell it like a newspaper reporter. When, where, what, and how did everything turn out. That kind of thing.
- To understand the deeper meaning of this story, first, you have to understand the rich, biblical symbolism of wine. What did wine represent to the people of Israel?
- What is pictured for us in Isaiah 25:6-9? How does this prophecy line up with what happened at the wedding in Cana? Draw out all the parallels you see in the prophecy and John 2?
- What did Jesus mean when he said to Mary, “Woman, my hour has not yet come?”
- What do you think this statement means—“At the wedding in Cana, Jesus sat at in the midst of joy and celebration sipping the coming sorrow so you and I could sit in the midst of this sorrow-filled world sipping the coming joy.”
- How has what you learned about Jesus in this passage, changed the way you think about your relationship with him? What does it say to you about your prayer life? What other applications do you see in this simple story with a deeper meaning?