

The Lord of the Wedding Feast John 2:1-11

“We can’t turn water into wine, but we can turn tacos into breakfast.”

- This is a popular story — even among irreligious people.
- It’s a story that is saying way more than most people realize. **[Pray]**

We are spending a year studying the gospel of John, discovering, or rediscovering the real Jesus. This text shows us:

- (1) who He is, (2) what he came to do, (3) what he offers, and (4) how to receive it.
- We’ll first talk through the story and then think on these things.

Even if you aren’t a Christian, you should want to study about Jesus if for no other reason because He **is the most influential man in human history.**

- That’s not an exaggeration.
- If you want to live intelligently in this world, you need to know who Jesus is.

But you should want to know who this Jesus is for more reasons than that: You have to do something with him.

- You can’t ignore Him.
- I want to say to unbelievers, if you’re going to reject him, **at least reject the real Jesus, the Jesus of the gospels.**
- There are many reasons you may reject him, but some reasons are really bad reasons, based on misunderstandings of him.

Here’s a popular idea: **“I want to have fun so I don’t want to bother with Christianity.”**
“I grew up going to church, but now I’m into my career, my recreation, and I’m trying to enjoy life.” Ever heard anything like that?

But what this text shows us what’s wrong with that idea...

Jesus has come **to give joy, not take it!**

- If you are rejecting Jesus and Christianity because you want to find joy, then this passage is saying **you don’t know the first thing about joy!**
- Jesus assumes the role of **the Master of Ceremonies**, the Toastmaster, and ensures that the party will go on... He’s come to give the best joy!
- He changes **a disastrous situation into a dynamic party!**

Don’t think that Christianity is about **keeping your nose clean, flying right, keeping the rules, and denying all pleasure.**

- Jesus does call us to self-denial, **but self-denial is a means to an end** – it’s so that our joy may be full, that we may have life that is truly life!

His first miracle is at **a wedding party!** This is important.

- It doesn’t take place at some **dirge**. It’s not in a class.
- It’s not a scene of boredom, but a scene of festivity. This is Jesus.

Don't get the wrong idea, it's not like everyone is drunk, dancing with lampshade on their head. Jesus isn't leading **Macarena at the club, but it is a party.**

Many Christians need to learn how to celebrate.

- Some do well at disciplines like daily Bible reading, attendance at gatherings — but they lack deep and abiding joy, and they are afraid to celebrate.
- The religious people hate Jesus because he knows how to celebrate.
 - Jesus got invited to parties!
 - People liked being around him!
 - “This man receives sinners and eats with them” (Lk 15).
 - He was a “party animal.” He throws the best parties. He gives the best joy.
 - Grace came in a person, and grace makes us glad (Acts 11:23)

Why should we celebrate? Because after suffering comes glory!

- Our sins are forgiven, our guilt is removed, death is defeated, kingdom is coming.
- This party in John 2 is a preview of the great feast to come!

This life is filled with trials, but throughout it all
there's a well of joy/wine from which to drink in Jesus.

Understanding the Story

You may have various reactions to this passage if you don't know what's going on.

Some can't get around the fact that Jesus made wine!

- I just want to say, “Relax.” **It's just wine.** Jesus did nothing illegal, sinful here.
- This was a beautiful/holy thing, a gracious thing, in addition to being a miraculous thing.
- And it was real wine, not 180 gallons of grape juice!
- **No one gets this excited about grape juice!**
- Yes, the wine could have been diluted, but the wine in the Bible had alcohol (Eph 5:18)

Others find it a bit “hoh hum.”

- It's a very quiet miracle.
- It's not a life or death situation.
- It's not leprosy. It's not hunger.
- Some folks have run out of wine at a wedding, a social crisis yes, but not a life/death situation.
- So why is this Jesus' first miracle?
- **If you wanted to start a movement, wouldn't you start with something more spectacular?**
- **A literature prof at Duke, Reynolds Price, wrote an interesting book called *Three Gospels*, in which comments that this account bears the marks of authenticity because if you're going to create a movement, and if you have the ability to perform a miracle, you don't start with a miraculous solution to a “mere social oversight.”**
- Jesus deals with a social embarrassment? He's not walking on water, raising the dead, etc.

Here's the key: Notice what John says in verse 11 – he calls it a “**sign.**”

- It's not *just* a miracle.
- It's intended to point us to something else.
- It's a message – it's a parable – that reveals something about Jesus and what he came to be and do.

In the Bible, **First things are important things.**

- First man, first sin, first verse, first commandment, etc.
- First miracle being a wedding is important.
 - And you must understand something of the whole Bible to understand what's taking place.
 - The Bible begins and ends with a wedding.
 - Jesus' first miracle is at a wedding – a clear sign of a greater wedding, a greater feast, greater joy, greater party, a greater wedding.

This passage shows us why you need Jesus/why you need to eternal life.

This miracle reveals to us – who He is, what he came to do, what he offers, and how to receive it.

The Story

Before we consider those ideas, let's first walk through the story in four scenes.

Scene #1: A Joyous Celebration (2:1-2)

V. 1 – Cana of Galilee. Jesus' mother was there. Nathaniel was from there (21:2).

- Jesus was **not** anti-social. He's at a party.
- Mary could have had some **responsibility** with this wedding.
- She could have taken on some **catering** responsibility.
- She or the other disciples could have been **related to the members of the wedding party**

V. 2 – “with the disciples”

- There are **five** at this point

Weddings in Village Palestine were a big deal!

- They were announced well in advance
- The whole village would come
- Sometimes they would last for a week
- People would even give up a whole week of work!
- It was most festive! It was joyous!
- It was socially inappropriate to turn down invitations.

In fact, the opening phrase shows us that he has come to bring an unimaginable feast/party/wedding/joyous celebration.

- Some see an allusion to the resurrection with the phrase, “**Third day**”

- I'm not sure that's the case, but what's more striking is the fact that John continues to talk about "**days**" (beginning in 1:19) and this is the seventh!
- When you consider what he says in *the beginning* – 1:1, and this seven day period, now a wedding party, I think **these are subtle clues that Jesus has come to bring a new creation.**
- Boice: "This was the last of the seven original and eventful days of Christ's ministry."
 - Day 1: JB confronted the Jewish delegation from Jerusalem. (1:19-29)
 - Day 2: John identified Jesus as the Lamb of God (1:29-ff)
 - Day 3: Andrew followed Jesus (1:35-39)
 - Day 4: Andrew's introduction of Jesus to Peter (1:40 is a new day)
 - Day 5: Jesus called Nathaniel (1:43)
 - Day 7: Third day after the Nathaniel callings, which by inclusive reckoning means 2 days later — Jesus arrived in Cana (see Carson)
 - So there was some travel time in the middle

A summary statement of John 2-4:54 is this:: 'the old has gone, the new has come!'

- There's new wine, and you need new wineskins to receive it.
 - Next week: The temple — the new has come

"The three chapters present the replacement of the old purifications by the wine of the kingdom of God, the old temple by the new in the risen Lord, an exposition of new birth for new creation, a contrast between the water of Jacob's well and the living water from Christ, and the worship of Jerusalem and Gerizim with worship 'in Spirit and in truth'" (Dodd, *IFG*, p. 297).

- This is all about a new creation dawning!

Jesus is the inaugurator of the new creation.

- **A new creation that involves a feast – the prophets continue to point this out!**
 - **Wine will flow. There will be joy, festivity, etc.**

Before we see this unfold in the story, notice **now the crisis....**

Scene #2: A Ruinous Situation (2:3-5)

V. 3 – The wine ran out.

- **May seem like no big deal to us, but in this culture, when the wine ran out, the party was over.**
- **Wine was not only customary; it was symbolic of joy, blessing and celebration in the Jewish culture.**
- **Not only would the party be over, but this would have brought egg on the face of this couple being married.**
 - Remember, this is an **honor and shame culture.**
 - If you fail to really provide a good wedding party, it would take years to get over that.
 - **This is not how you want to begin your marriage!**
 - We get it in our world — wedding day is supposed to be perfect.
 - **Girls grow up playing wedding.... "Say Yes to the Dress"**

In that culture, the financial responsibility for the wedding belonged to the Groom.

- All the men with daughters said, “Amen.”
- I’m going to tell my future son in laws, “Sorry, I’m a biblical man. You pay.”
- These weddings were so serious that it wouldn’t have been out of the realm of possibility for the bride’s family to sue the Groom for failure to provide.

Everyone is unaware but a few people.

- Mary comes to him saying, “They have no wine.”

Why does she come to Jesus?

- Joseph likely died already (not mentioned later, not present at crucifixion). So she’s used to relying on Jesus.
 - It’s very likely that Jesus was the provider for the family.
- But there may be another reason.
 - Mary knew that Jesus was the **Messiah**, based on her virgin birth experience.
 - She knows that Jesus now has **some disciples**.
 - Now would be a **perfect time to launch his public ministry!**
 - He hasn’t performed a miracle yet, so she may not actually have a miracle in mind, but may want him to **do something to show himself as Messiah**.

V. 4 – Jesus responds interestingly, “**Woman, what’s does this have to do with me?**”

- Some of you have a new fav life verse!
- Teenage boys, don’t try this on your mother! WWJD!
- Husbands, here you go!
- This is an awkward conversation.
- Woman? It’s not “Dear Woman” (). It’s “Woman.” (Cf., John 20:15)
- This strikes us as **disrespectful**, but Jesus says this to women throughout the Gospels.
- A close equivalent may be something like “**Ma’am.**”
- **It’s not disrespectful, but it’s not “Mother.”** This is significant.
- Jesus isn’t saying, “**I’m 30 now! You can stop giving me chores to do!**”
- **Jesus is redefining the relationship.**

From this point forward, **Mary will relate to Jesus as his disciple.**

- **She won’t dictate what he must do; she like every other disciple will be called to submit to him (v. 5).**
- **Jesus will be resolute in living out the will of his Heavenly Father.**
- **Carson:** “But now that he had entered into the purpose of his coming, everything, even family ties, had to be subordinated to his divine mission.... It is a remarkable fact that everywhere Mary appears during the course of Jesus’ ministry, Jesus is at pains to establish distance between them (e.g. Mt. 12:46–50). This is not callousness on Jesus’ part: on the cross he makes provision for her future (19:25–27). But she, like every other person, must come to him as to the promised Messiah, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”

How do we know that? How do we know things are changing?

- Not only with Mary's word in verse 5 ("Do whatever he tells you"), but also with Jesus' answer, **"My hour has not yet come."**
 - To what does this refer?
 - It refers to the **hour of his death.**
 - **My mission is bound up in the cross.**
 - **Jesus' path is now set for the rest of the gospel.**

V. 5 "Do whatever he tells you."

- Notice that's **the language of a disciple.**
- **This really is a great life verse!**
- **Here's what Mary detects, "he is going to do his own thing for his own reasons, and I'm cool with that."**

So it turns out now that Jesus will do a miracle, and he will solve this social problem, but not to prevent embarrassment. But for another reasons: **as a sign.**

- Don't read this as, "I'm not going to do a miracle.... Oh, alright Mom. I'll do one since you persist!"
- **He's got his own agenda.**
- **He knows the big picture.**
- **He will do the miracle as a sign of something greater to come.**

#3: A Quiet Transformation (2:6-10)

V. 6 – Eyewitness detail

Stone jars for purification

- **This was for ceremonial washing.**
- **At the wedding, the guests' hands and the utensils would be cleansed.**
- **This a sign of the new creation dawning... the old is passing away**

V. 7 – Fill the stone jars with water... from a well probably

- **120-180 gallons for these rites**
- **Jesus will replace the water of Judaism with the wine of the gospel, of the new covenant. Something better!**
- **"Jesus changes the water of Judaism into the wine of Christianity, the water of Christlessness into the wine of the richness and fullness of eternal life in Christ, the water of the law into the wine of the gospel." (Leon Morris)**

V. 8-9 – We aren't told how this miracle actually took place *exactly*.

- **But transformation has occurred.**
- It was an abundant provision! A sign of blessing.
- **And it was a wonderful wedding gift!**
- The Toastmaster is oblivious to what's happened.

V. 10 - You've saved the best until now.

- **The Groom receives praise! He gets the credit for Jesus' work.**
- You enjoy the good wine while your palate is sensitive.
- **Jesus is superior to everything that has gone before him!**

#4: An Effective Revelation (2:11)

Jesus makes wine out of well water – no grapes, no fermentation.
But it's quiet. No one knows where this has come from.

Who does believe in Him? His disciples.

- The look past the sign, to the person doing it.

They see him as Messiah. Why?

- These signs are like clues pointing us to Jesus.
- We must read the Bible backwards and forwards
- **Jeremiah 31:12, Joel, Amos 9:13-14, Isaiah 25:5-6 – Messiah is associated with wedding, feast, joy, wine.**
- **Mark 3, Jn 3, Luke 14, Rev 19 – wedding/Groom**

The Significance

This miracle shows us who Jesus is, what he came to do, what he offers, and how to receive it.

#1: Who He Is: The Lord of the Feast, and the True Bridegroom

A. The Lord of the Feast

- He's come to bring the joy!
- The Master of the Banquet was called to make the party great.
- When Jesus turned water into wine and saves the day he is saying, "I am the true master of the banquet. The Lord of the Feast."
- If you're going to reject Jesus, don't do it because there's greater joy elsewhere!
- **Keller, "I am the Lord of the Feast. In the end, I come to bring joy. That's the reason my calling card, my first miracle, is to set everyone laughing."**

B. Ultimate Bridegroom

- He's got his wedding on his mind.
- **How many of you when you attend a wedding, think of your own wedding?**
- This sign is a pointer to the ultimate marriage to come.
- He understands himself as the Bridegroom...
 - "Why fast when the bridegroom is here" – this is a time for joy.
- The bridegroom will return and fasting will give way to feasting!
- Revelation 21:2 – the ultimate consummation

Read Revelation 21:1–4:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. 4 He will

wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

#2: What He Came to Do: Die for His Bride

If you're single and you go to a wedding, you begin to think about your wedding.

- You begin to ask questions about it...
- You're unsettled because you don't have the answers; **you don't know the future.**
- Jesus **knows what He must do.**
- He knows for us to drink the cup of joy, he must drink the cup of suffering!
- His hour will come.
- We will remember his death through the Lord's supper as the wine symbolizes his blood.

#3: What He Offers: Superior Satisfaction and the Ultimate Union

A. Superior Satisfaction

We are taught in Scripture to not only know that the Lord is good, but **to taste and see!**

- **Edwards used to say that our heart gets new sensory abilities when we become new creations.**
- Becoming a Christian is not just about signing a doctrinal statement, it's about coming to a feast.
- It's about coming to superior satisfaction
- The good wine points to this – Jesus is the most powerful of all sensations. Nothing is better than him.
- “You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their wine and grain abound” **(Ps 4:7)**

Do you believe that Jesus provides the greatest joy and your highest good?

- Do you believe that in him is fullness of joy and in him are pleasures forevermore!
- He's better than _____
- **Earnest Hemingway's biographer said of this man who chased pleasure before taking his own life, “The Wine ran out.”**
- Eventually for all of us, the wine will run out... only in Jesus does the wine never run out.
- Everyone in the world, who is searching for joy/party, is really searching for the King and the kingdom!

B. The Ultimate Union

Jesus relates to us as Shepherd/Sheep, as King/Servant, and as Groom/Wife

- This tells us not just about him, but us.
- We long to **be received, and embraced.**
 - I have done a lot of weddings, and this is what I know – **every bride looks ravishing.**
 - Brides --- with all of the decorations, style, dress, etc. look amazing.
 - Every Groom wants to run down the aisle!

All of us long for that kind of embrace.

- That's what we have in Jesus.
- One who because of his grace finds us ravishing, who loves us beyond any human love between a husband and wife.
- There is no union like the union of this Groom His Bride.
- You can take every little need to him because of his love.
- You can be assured of his love.

By pointing us beyond to the ultimate wedding, this is what Jesus does:

- He relativizes your need for marriage.
- He relatives your need for the perfect marriage.
- How? By showing us that no one here has had the kind of marriage that the Bible portrays is coming!
- The best of marriages don't have the kind of union we anticipate.
- Therefore, we wait for this marriage.
- We trust in his timing.
- True love waits – Jesus waits for us, as we wait for him.

*4. The bride eyes not her garment,
But her dear Bridegrooms face;
I will not gaze at glory
But on my King of grace.
Not at the crown He giveth
But on His pierced hand;
The Lamb is all the glory
Of Emmanuels land.*

*5. O I am my Beloveds
And my Beloved is mine!
He brings a poor vile sinner
Into His house of wine
I stand upon His merit -
I know no other stand,
Not een where glory dwelleth
In Emmanuels land.*

#4: How to Receive It: See the Glory and Believe

- I love the simplicity of verse 11.
- It's John's purpose for writing – "that you may believe."
- Take Him as your Groom, as the Giver of Joy, as the One who will satisfy you forever.

- **He's the Lord of the wedding feast.**
- **Taste and see that the Lord is good, blessed are those who find refuge in Him.**

In all of our pleasures, Jesus is better. In all of our sufferings, Christ is enough!