

JESUS CHANGES WATER INTO WINE

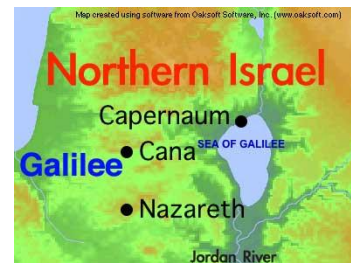
John 2:1-11

Key Verse: 2:11

“This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.”

Today’s passage records the first of Jesus’ miracles. He performed a fantastic miracle at a wedding feast. This miracle was a signal that Jesus came to this world to bring joy and happiness of a wedding feast. It also showed that Jesus can change a useless person into a source of blessing to many others.

It was the first week of Jesus’ public ministry. At this beginning stage of his messianic ministry, Jesus went to a wedding in Cana with his mother and his disciples (Cana was located about 10 miles north of Nazareth, his hometown). Look at verse 1. *On the third day, a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Mary the mother of Jesus was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited.* The disciples were probably excited about going to the feast. They were always interested in eating opportunities. In the gospels there are many scenes of them eating. They were always hungry because they did not have enough food or time to eat, as they were constantly on the move. We can imagine how their mouths became watery, thinking about delicious food at the feast.



To the Jews, wedding was one of the most important events in life, as it is for us today. The festivities began on a Wednesday, and lasted 7 days (Ge 29:27). According to the Jewish custom, the groom and bride were dressed in wedding robes, and were treated like a king and a queen. They opened their house for a week to welcome their guests. Wedding was a joyful occasion for the whole community in a country where life was hard under the Roman occupation. It was a bright spot in an otherwise drab and hard life. So what happened at the wedding? What spiritual lessons can we learn from this event?

First, Jesus followed God’s time schedule. When the mood of the feast was at its height, something serious happened. The wine ran out. This was no trivial matter. Wine was essential to a wedding feast, for it lifted the spirit of the guests (Ps 104:15). It was a potentially embarrassing situation for the bridegroom and his family.

Mary noticed the problem first. She went to Jesus and said, “They have no more wine.” What was Jesus’ reply to her? He said to her, “Dear woman, why do you involve me? My time has not yet come” (3-4). His answer was very uncharacteristic of our Lord. It is shocking. His reply to his mother sounds to us cold and uncaring. What son would call his mother “Dear woman”? It sounds so formal and even offensive. Why would the gentle Jesus talk to his mother this way? We know in fact that Jesus cared very much

about his mother. We also know that Jesus did not put down women even though the Jewish society at that time was a male-dominant one. So why did he call her “Dear woman”? Some people suggest that the Greek words should be better translated into “Dear Madam” or “Ma’am.” But that doesn’t help us. Sons normally would not call their mothers Madam. So why did Jesus use this unusual language?

In light of what he said next (“my time has not yet come”), we can say that Jesus was speaking to Mary not as her human son but as the Son of God. When he said “Dear woman” he was speaking to her as the Messiah. Thus, Jesus was declaring to her that he had begun his messianic ministry. He had been a good son to her for more than 30 years, but now he was telling her that he began the work of God as the Messiah. Jesus was telling his mother that what she was asking him to do was God’s work, not a human favor. Jesus used the same words, “Dear woman,” when he spoke to her from the cross as he was being crucified (19:26).

Jesus also said, “My time has not yet come.” What does this mean? It means that Jesus was following God’s time schedule. Jesus used the term, “my time” or “my hour,” many times in this gospel (7:6,8; 12:23; 17:1). Jesus was always conscious of God’s time schedule for him. When the time of his crucifixion approached, Jesus said, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified” (Jn 12:23). When God’s time came, Jesus glorified God by revealing God’s love through his death on the cross as the Lamb of God.

Sometimes we waste away our time, thinking that there is always tomorrow. Many of us are kings and queens of procrastination. But Jesus did not follow his human nature. He didn’t do whatever he felt like doing. Instead, he was conscious of God’s plan for him. He cared about God’s will more than his own. Humanly, he wanted to stay as a good son to his mother. He probably wanted to say, “Yes, mother. I will see what I can do for you.” Instead, Jesus said, “Dear woman, why do you involve me? My time has not yet come.”

Second, Mary’s prayer. Mary brought the wine problem to Jesus. She knew that running out of wine at the wedding was a serious matter for the family. But she could do nothing on her own. Still, she wanted to do something to help the family. Mary decided to bring the problem to Jesus. She did not go to the banquet master or the groom. Her coming to Jesus with the problem was the first step of her prayer. When we have a problem, we first worry about it. We despair when the problem appears to be too hard for us to handle. We often go to a friend or someone who may be able to help us. But we learn from Mary that we should first come to Jesus. We should pray first. There are many men and women of faith in the Bible who came to God when they had a problem. For example, when Rebekah had a difficulty with her pregnancy, she came to God in prayer first, instead of rushing to a midwife or OB/GYN specialist.

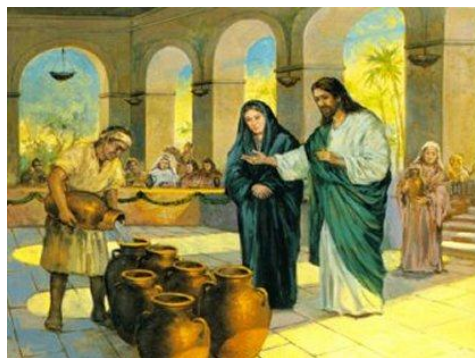
When Mary came to Jesus in prayer, Jesus said to her, “Dear woman, why do you involve me?” His answer didn’t seem positive at all. Mary could have been discouraged by his response. But she was not upset, despite the seeming rejection. She remained

calm, believing that Jesus would deal with the problem in his own way. This was the second step of her prayer. We call this the faith of waiting on God. Mary prayed and waited on the Lord. She did not try to change the will of God through her prayer. God answers our prayers in three ways: yes, no, or wait. Waiting on God's time is very difficult. We often become impatient. But we should know that God has his reason to delay his action. We should trust him and be willing to wait on him.

Let's see what Mary did next. She quietly stepped out to where the servants were. What did Mary say to the servants? Did she ask them, "Go and see if any liquor store is open"? No! She said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you" (5). She prepared them to have obedient hearts toward Jesus' words. This quiet act by Mary revealed her faith. She made an environment in which Jesus could work a miracle. This was the third step of her prayer. Her prayer was not a wishful thinking. Her prayer was an expression of her deep trust in God. Her act of environment making showed her trust in the Lord.

How can we apply this to us today? Suppose you are failing one of your classes (I hope not!). You pray earnestly to God that he may help you to get an A in the class. But you just received a mid-term grade of a D. What should you do? You could pray some more but don't do any study, hoping for a miracle. Or you could make an environment in which Jesus could work, as Mary did, by making a more serious effort to study for the class. Your environment making may be an expression of your trust in God.

Third, the servants' beautiful obedience. It turned out that Jesus wasn't rejecting Mary's request. Jesus, the Son of God, was ready to reveal God's glory. He spoke to the servants. Look at verse 7. *"Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim.* When Jesus told them, "Fill the jars with water," they obeyed him without a word of objection. We can imagine this must have been a difficult task for them to obey. Servants in a wedding feast were very busy. They had many things to take care of. When the command to fill the jars with water came from Jesus, who was not even their master, they could have complained, saying, "Don't you see that we are busy?" Besides, what good was it to fill the jars with water when the problem was lack of wine? Jesus' command did not make any sense to them. Also, filling the jars with water was no small task. Without indoor plumbing, they had to draw water from a deep well using a bucket and carried it to the house. The six stone jars held about 120-180 gallons of water used for the ceremonial washing of hands and feet. This required a good deal of their time and effort. Amazingly verse 7 says, "so they filled them to the brim." They obeyed Jesus and filled the jars to the brim. The words "to the brim" indicate that their obedience was not half-hearted. They were willing and they obeyed wholeheartedly, not 70%, but 100%. The servants set a good example of how to obey God's word.



Look at verse 8. *Then he told them, “Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet.”* Jesus now asked them to take the wash water to the master of the banquet to taste. This was even harder for them to obey. They knew what kind of water it was. The water was not even of drinking quality. What would they do if the banquet master got mad after tasting the dirty water? Jesus’ command sounded unreasonable. But they again did not question him. They simply obeyed his words. Then what happened? A miracle happened. Jesus changed the water into top quality wine! Thanks to Jesus, they now had 150 gallons of the finest wine!

Look at verses 9-10. The master of the banquet was puzzled. He 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.”* The banquet master had no idea about what had happened. He only knew that the wine was the best quality wine. Jesus performed the first miraculous sign when the servants obeyed his words. Because of Jesus, the joyful wedding feast continued. The guests were blessed by Jesus’ miracle. And the obedient servants experienced the best blessing--they personally learned who Jesus really was.

Many people received God’s blessings by obeying his word. In John 9, there is a story about a man born blind. Jesus had mercy on the blind beggar. He spit on the ground and made mud with his saliva and smeared on the blind man’s eyes. Then he told the man, “Go and wash in the pool of Siloam” (Jn 9:7). This was a kind of unconventional and humiliating medical treatment. But the man did not complain. He didn’t say, “Why do you humiliate me before all these people? I am not dirty; I’m just blind!” Instead, he obeyed Jesus. He went and washed himself. And his eyes were opened. He was blessed when he obeyed the word of Jesus!

Obeying God’s word, however, is not easy. Obedience is not our favorite word. People want to do what they want and when they want. Obedience doesn’t come naturally. Obedience must be learned. Even Jesus learned obedience. Hebrews 5:8 says, “Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered...” We must learn how to obey the word of God. When we obey the word of God even when we don’t fully understand it, he helps us to experience his blessings. We may also need help from men and women of God to encourage us to obey Jesus, just as Mary helped the servants.

Fourth, the meaning of the first miracle. Let’s read verse 11. *“This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.”* John says that this miracle was a sign. It was more than a simple display of Jesus’ supernatural power. Signs are more than miracles. They are miracles that teach us spiritual lessons. John’s gospel records seven such miracles of Jesus. So what is the meaning of his first miracle?

This first miraculous sign shows us that Jesus came to bless the mankind. He revealed God's glory through the miracle. Mankind lost God's blessing in the Garden of Eden when sin entered the world. The happy and blessed relationship between God and man was broken. But the miracle in Cana showed that Jesus came to this world to restore our relationship with God. Jesus came to bless us as he blessed the wedding. Many people assume that Christians have a boring life. They might ask us, "What do you do all the time while we enjoy life? Praying?" But we know that Christian life is not boring. It is true that we stay away from drinking parties or nightclubs that may provide some instant gratification. But we have deep inner joy and peace that only Jesus can give. Our life in Christ is often compared with wedding in the Bible. The church is the bride and Jesus the Bridegroom (Rev 19:7; Mk 2:20). We will wear a wedding garment, enjoy our time with the Bridegroom, and will attend a wedding feast in heaven (Jn 3:29; Rev 21:2).

This miracle of Jesus also teaches us that he has the power to transform sinners. Jesus came to this world to change useless sinful people into blessed men and women of God. As Jesus changed water into wine, so Jesus can transform those who come to him into children of God. We can fix an old machine, but we cannot fix a broken person. But Jesus can heal a broken person. This is a miracle that each one of us can personally experience. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" No matter what kind of sins we committed in the past, if we accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior and commit our lives to him, he can change us into new persons. In a sense, this is a bigger miracle than changing water into wine. Think about it. Who can change you into a new person with a new heart and eternal life? No one can. It is impossible. No psychologist or psychiatrist can change your inner core through counseling or medication. But Jesus can change us. One young man among us used to chase after two things—money and pleasures. He had three jobs that consumed him. What little time he had left he spent on drinking and womanizing. By God's grace, he came to Jesus and Jesus changed his life. This semester he is taking three classes while working fulltime. Despite his busy schedule, he joyfully spends time to study the Bible and pray, and also to invite students to the word of God with a big smile on his face. Jesus changed his life to be a source of blessing!



In today's passage, we learned that Jesus came to the world to change us from useless sinners into blessed children of God. We also learned that Jesus came to bless us, as he blessed the wedding feast at Cana. May God help us to come to Jesus and be changed into useful servants by his transforming power!