

**Series: Wedding**  
**Sermon: Water into Wine**

**John 2:1-11 (NIV)**

On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, 2 and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. 3 When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine."

4 "Woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My hour has not yet come."

5 His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

6 Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.

7 Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim.

8 Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet."

They did so, 9 and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside 10 and 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."

11 What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

**Sermon**

The other day was just another ordinary day. Wake up, go get the kids while Steph showers. Get them dressed, get them breakfast. Steph and I tag team, I do my thing. We get the kids to school and we split our ways, Steph off to school and I of to church. Late afternoon, I pick up the kids, play for a couple of hours, make dinner, and I leave for evening church activities. Come home, tuck them in, do our little tickle games, read a story, take them on their 18 trips to the bathroom before they settle down under the covers, kiss goodnight and off to bed they go. Just an ordinary day. I'm sure that you have your ordinary days as well. Anybody here do a diary? Most of us do not. It would say something like, "Got up, went to work, did laundry. Watched TV, or other goofing around." Not an exciting type of thing to write home about. Just another ordinary day. I'll come back to that image later.

The story of Jesus turning water into wine at the wedding in Cana, I think contains one of the more powerful messages in all of Scripture. But it seems that a lot of times, people get snagged on one of the details and end up missing the joy of the message. I've heard a few sermons in my day that center on this story. There are several places within the narrative where people get hung up on this story and end up missing the point, so I want to start off by getting those out of the way.

The first stumbling block tends to be issues surrounding alcohol. Alcohol is often a deadly and destructive force in today's world as anyone who has lived with an alcoholic or has faced that addiction themselves can tell you.

As a result, there are some whose only commentary on this story is an attempt to prove that Jesus turned water into grape juice. Don't get stuck there. This is not a story about alcohol. Or I hear that Jesus drank alcohol, therefore I can drink alcohol. Jesus drank wine, yes. But the story isn't about drink. Let it go for a moment. You might find it uncomfortable and difficult to explain to your children, but the facts of the story are that Jesus was at a wedding party where the guests were already plowed. They were soused. Then, when the wine ran out, instead of saying "Good, now go home and sober up," Jesus provided about 150 gallons more of the best wine around. Invite Jesus to every party! We're out of booze. What would Jesus do? Get more booze! Matter of fact, don't get more, I'll just make some from the tap. That's not the point of the story. And if you get too worried about it, you're going to miss the point.

The second thing that hangs people up in this story is the way that Jesus talks to his mother. No matter that Jesus is 30 years old, most people feel like Jesus is at least a little bit rude to his mother here. So they go off on tangents about obedience, cutting apron strings, and the fact that Jesus gives in and does it anyway. Often I've heard Mary's faith examined, how even though Jesus says "No way, Mom," she goes and puts the servants on stand-by anyway. Those discussions can be helpful, but I don't think they're the reason John put the story in his Gospel.

John is a different sort of Gospel. John was not written to get the facts out there. John was written with the assumption that people already knew the facts about Jesus' life--it has even been suggested that John was written as a commentary on the other three Gospels. John is not looking to tell his readers what happened in Jesus' life. John wants to tell his readers what the life of Jesus means...what the core message is really all about. To enter the Gospel of John is to enter a world of symbols and verses that have at least two or three levels of meaning.

John is highly selective about the material that he includes, but because people don't realize that John is talking in symbols and philosophy and metaphor, they allow themselves to get caught up in details...like was it really wine or how dare Jesus talk to his mother that way. At best they end up saying that this is a story about empathy. Jesus sees people who are embarrassed because they can't provide for their guests, Jesus feels their pain and helps out. Good sermons can come from all of that, but all of those things stay on the surface. The only way to get at John is to start out with the assumption that the message John wants to convey is below the surface and the details of the story are just a means to that end.

So, let's go to the story with that in mind. Let's assume that this is not primarily a story about a wedding, about drinking, or about who scurried around to do what for whom. It's in John, so it must be something more than that. The first thing to notice is that John does not call it a miracle. In fact, John does not call anything a miracle in his Gospel. Instead, John calls them signs. He records seven "signs" in his Gospel and changing the water into wine is the first. We can assume that all that is intentional. This was a sign for people, something that would inform people about what they might expect from this Nazarene, something that would point them toward a deeper meaning. Jesus has power over the world, over sickness, over the water, over the weather, even over death. But the miracles are not the point of any of these stories. The miracles are signs that point to something deeper. Big deal if water is turned into wine. Big deal if he can feed 5,000 people from five loaves and two fish. Big deal if he can heal a blind man or give a mute a voice. What does it mean for us today?

Remember, it is only in the Gospel of John that Jesus is recorded as saying, "I have come that they might have life and have it more abundantly." This statement, I believe, is what the miracle at Cana is all about. Water, the basic necessity of life, is changed into wine--the symbol not just of life, but of abundant, joyous, and celebrative life. If you go into this thinking wine is evil, you miss the boat completely. Wine in Scripture is a symbol of joy and warmth and celebration and abundance. In changing the water into wine and allowing the wedding celebration to continue, Jesus is clueing people in on his mission. Jesus has come to transform the world. To turn the ordinary into something extraordinary.

We believe this to be true. The ugly duckling becomes what? The beautiful swan. Beauty and the Beast, the beast becomes a man. Kiss the frog and it becomes a prince. The caterpillar becomes a butterfly, at our house, a transformer car becomes a robot. And it is true that God can and does transform people in those ways. God does take mean, ugly lives and transforms them into beautiful angels of mercy. God does take us when we are crawling along on our bellies and gives us wings to fly. God does take us when we are broken and make us whole.

But there is another type of transformation that is modeled at Cana. At Cana, the object of transformation is something that is already good and pure and necessary. There is nothing that needs fixing in the water. Water is good. The message of transformation at Cana is not about making the bad good, but about making the good even better. It is first, I think, a message about the Law and Judaism. The jugs that Jesus had filled with water were the water jugs used for ritual purification and washing. It wasn't drinking water that he changed. The jugs were there so that the wedding guests could comply with Jewish law. This is Holy Water. When you walk into a Roman Catholic Church, there's a small bowl of water, and if you're Catholic, you dip your finger in the Holy Water and make the sign of the cross. Why? To make us clean. At Baptism, we use water in the same way. To make us Spiritually clean. This is the water that Jesus' changes. It's not the bottled water from the store, it's water from the Holy fount, from the baptistry. Jesus takes that ritual water, that makes us clean, and turns it into something else. He turned it into wine. These jugs were filled with water used to clean them on the outside, although it had a spiritual component to it. And I think this first act of his ministry, this first sign, should be paired with one of his last acts of ministry, the last supper. He took the cup. The cup of what? Wine. Take and drink, do this for the forgiveness of sins. Water cleans the body, but the wine cleans the soul. The water washes away dirt, the wine washes away sin. Spiritually speaking.

We don't celebrate the water into wine story because Jesus did it. But we celebrate his miracles because they teach us about our life in Christ in the here and now. Think about the holidays that we celebrate today. Christmas. We don't do Christmas because of an event 2,000 years ago. We celebrate it because it tells us today, Peace on Earth, goodwill toward all. We don't blow up fireworks on the fourth of July because of what happened 200 years ago, but we celebrate the holiday because we still enjoy our freedom today - it still has meaning and purpose in 2016. We don't do thanksgiving because 40 people were thankful in the 1600's. But because we're thankful today. We don't look at the miracles because Jesus performed them centuries ago, but because they tell us about how God still works in our life today. They are signs of his love. Signs of his presence. Signs that He still cares. Jesus turned ordinary wine into something special.

An ordinary day. After time, ordinary days turn into ordinary weeks, ordinary months, and then the years slip by. And I can imagine, years from now, I'll look back on these ordinary days and consider them something special. When I'm 80, I would almost give anything to go back and just have a day like I'm having now. What I would call an ordinary day. And I wonder, if it were possible, what would I do? Even today, if I could go back 30 years and relive a day in 1986. What would I do? Would I look at the TV Guide and blow an evening in front of the TV? Maybe that's what I did in 1986. Monday is Family Ties, Tuesday is Charles in Charge, Wednesday is Dallas, Thursdays is Little House on the Prairie, Fridays is Rosanne, Saturdays is Love Boat and Fantasy Island. I have no idea if those were right. But if I could go back, is that what I would do? Of course not. I'd see my grandpas again. I'd visit people and places that were important to me. And I would go with the understanding that it wasn't just an ordinary day, but something extraordinary.

This morning, I want you to leave with this thought. Every day is something special. There are no ordinary days. Each day is extraordinary in and of itself. And the true miracle is not that God makes something ordinary into something special, but that we see that everyday is a miracle in and of itself - something to be enjoyed. Lived. Used. And our ordinary days will be turned into something special - the wine of life. Amen.