

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church

"Wedding at Cana"

Scripture: John 2:1-11, Psalm 104:14-16

Hymns: the joy of the Lord is my strength, I'm trading my sorrows,

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Cafe Manager Deborah Foster was packing up after a long day when the mother-of-the-bride came to her beach-side coffee-house begging for help.

"We were just closing up and the bride's mother comes running up to me really upset and said they had tried to set up the wedding on the beach but the winds and rain were ridiculous...

She asked to use our undercover area to host the ceremony so we did what we could and managed to get the 30 or 40 guests under the shelter and set up pretty quickly...

They were such a lovely couple and we were so happy to be able to step in and help them at the last minute."<sup>i</sup>

Ever attended a wedding that need some last-minute adjustments. The wedding dress torn, the rings were misplaced, the groom showed up intoxicated ...you probably found that fascinating.

Ever been part of the wedding party facing the same situation? You may have grown some grey hairs.

Today we hear that familiar Gospel story  
About the wedding at Cana.  
When the wine runs out  
Jesus performs a miracle  
and rescues the celebration.

Jesus saves the day!

For those of you who are more familiar  
With the Gospel of John,  
You'll realise that the Gospel writer is highly selective  
In his selection of Jesus' miracles stories.

There are only seven miracles in John,  
Far fewer than in the synoptic Gospels of  
Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

In John there are few miracles,  
Moreover, these miracles are presented as signs,

Events that provoke faith,  
So that in the writer's words we might,  
"believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God,  
and that by believing [we] may have life in his name."<sup>ii</sup>

As far as today's sign goes,  
It gives us quite a lot to think about.  
Lots to think about concerning Jesus,  
And lots to think about concerning the life he brings.

That the sign endorses life is evidently clear.  
 Jesus provides refreshments  
 so that the celebration can continue.

It is a strange miracle in one sense.  
 Of all that human needs that were evident in Cana  
 It would seem that providing wine for a wedding  
 Would be low on anyone's priority list.

As one commentator has noted:

“Compared with the needs of the desperately sick  
 or seriously disabled that Jesus usually healed,  
 or even with the hunger of the crowds he fed,  
 more wine for a party seems more like a luxury than a  
 need.

Certainly it would be a serious social disgrace  
 to run out of wine on such an occasion.  
 But the family is evidently not poor:  
 they have servants and expensive stone jars.  
 Could they not send out to buy more wine?

It seems we must recognise that Jesus does not so much meet a need  
 as supply an extravagance.”<sup>iii</sup>

Jesus does not just meet a need  
 But supplies an extravagance.

Which helps us understand  
 That God is as concerned about our joy, our happiness,  
 As much as our survival.

That wine will allow the couple  
To begin their marriage without shame or embarrassment.  
That wine will provide the needed social lubrication  
To ensure that alliances form with the in-laws  
And that the marriage will receive continuing support  
Through the years.

Jesus' sign endorses life.

But it does more than that.  
Jesus's sign, Jesus' miracle validates his identity.

Wine has always been a symbol  
Of God's blessing and provision  
For creation.

As the psalmist reminds us:

"He makes grass grow for the cattle,  
and plants for people to cultivate—  
bringing forth food from the earth:

wine that gladdens human hearts,  
oil to make their faces shine,  
and bread that sustains their hearts."<sup>iv</sup>

Wine is also part of the imagery  
Associated with the fulfillment of God's purposes,  
And the time when God would redeem his people.

Indeed the “Two images [which express]  
 the extravagant joy of the messianic age  
 [are] the wedding banquet and abundance of wine.”<sup>v</sup>

The prophet Isaiah foretells that day when:  
 “the Lord Almighty will prepare  
 a feast of rich food for all peoples,  
 a banquet of aged wine—  
 the best of meats and the finest of wines...

[then] he will swallow up death forever.  
 The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces...”<sup>vi</sup>

With this in mind we can see than when Jesus transforms  
 The water in those ceremonial stone jars into wine  
 Jesus is doing something highly symbolic:  
 Jesus is proclaiming the fulfillment of God’s promises.

The MC’s astonished statement to the bridegroom  
 about ‘saving the best for last’  
 surely refers to the wine he’s just tasted.

But at a deeper level this statement is also about Jesus.  
 In this sign we recognise that God “has saved up till last  
 his very best gift to Israel and the world.

[God’s] best gift was not in Israel’s past  
 when he gave Moses the Law and Israel the land.  
 [God] has kept the best wine until the coming of Jesus.”<sup>vii</sup>

Jesus sign validates his purpose and identity.  
 And at the end of today's reading  
 We are told that "his disciples believed in him".

Jesus' sign endorse life  
 Jesus sign validates his identity.  
 And Jesus' sign reveals our role as his servants  
 Who work with him in this new age.

I find it instructive that Jesus didn't just say the word  
 And the water turned into a silky Cabernet.

Instead Jesus gave orders to his servants,  
 To first fill the stone jars with water,  
 And then to draw out the water  
 And bring it to the MC.

Instead of doing it all himself  
 Jesus chooses to works with some servants;  
 Later he will work with his disciples.  
 All of them are people who are committed to:  
 'do whatever Jesus says'.<sup>viii</sup>

Now it must have sounded like a pretty mundane request:  
 'fill those jars with water'.

But when they did what Jesus asked,  
 Abundant blessing followed their actions.  
 Not that they were themselves were just blessed,  
 But they were used to bless others.

I wonder what might happen  
When we choose to live and respond as servants  
Doing whatever Jesus asks us to do.

Could it be that when we listen to Jesus  
And fill out that form to provide that monthly gift for that charity,  
That this act will provide the necessary encouragement  
To keep the charity's director in her position,  
Sustaining her spirit  
While she engages in an important ministry.

We may never know...

What is clear from this story  
Is that when we follow Jesus' directions  
That blessings will follow.  
Blessings will be poured out on those around us.

A young couple, their families, their entire village is blessed.  
All because people decide to actually to what Jesus says.

Today we encounter a familiar story  
That maybe entertains us.  
But when we think about it  
it also asks a lot of us.

Jesus' sign endorses life.

So will we be a people who dare to celebrate,  
 To host our own parties, feasts, and banquets  
 Because Jesus has “liberated us from a fear of life  
 And a fear of death”?<sup>ix</sup>

It is easier to remain grim and tightfisted.

Jesus’ sign confirms his identity.  
 So will we dare to believe  
 That he is the one in whom God’s greatest plans  
 For our lives and our world are finally expressed?

It is easier to remain agnostic and ambivalent.

Jesus’ sign invites us to work in his service  
 and be instruments through whom God’s abundant life will be  
 unleashed.

So will we dare listen to God’s mundane directions  
 Expecting lavish blessing to result?

It is easier to remain self-serving and skeptical.

By God’s grace may we be given faith to believe.  
 May we be given faith to follow.  
 And may God’s extravagant blessings  
 be lavished on our communities.

Amen and amen.

<sup>i</sup> Revision of Kate Paraskevos “Gold Coast couple’s wedding saved from wild wet weather at Miami” *Gold Coast Bulletin* October 17, 2017 [www.goldcoastbulletin.com.au/news/gold-coast-couples-wedding-saved-from-wild-wet-weather-at-miami/news-story/19e608acae4293713674f42d239d348d](http://www.goldcoastbulletin.com.au/news/gold-coast-couples-wedding-saved-from-wild-wet-weather-at-miami/news-story/19e608acae4293713674f42d239d348d)

<sup>ii</sup> John 20:31 NIV

<sup>iii</sup> Richard Bauckham “Second Sunday after the Epiphany, Year C; John 2:1-11” *The Lectionary Commentary: the Gospels* 489

<sup>iv</sup> Psalm 104:14-15 NIV

<sup>v</sup> Richard Bauckham “Second Sunday after the Epiphany, Year C; John 2:1-11” *The Lectionary Commentary: the Gospels* 491

<sup>vi</sup> Isaiah 25:6-8 NIV

<sup>vii</sup> *Ibid* 490

<sup>viii</sup> see the Feeding of the 5,000 in John 6:5-14

<sup>ix</sup> quote from University of Chicago theologian Robert Hotchkins in Robert M. Brearley “John 2:1-1, Pastoral Perspective” *Feasting on the Word: Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary - Feasting on the Word – Year C, Volume 1: Advent through Transfiguration*.