

John 2:1 – 12

¹ On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there; ² and both Jesus and his disciples were invited to the wedding. ³ When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, ‘They have no wine.’ ⁴ And Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, what does that have to do with us? My hour has not yet come.’ ⁵ His mother said to the servants, ‘Whatever he says to you, do it.’ ⁶ Now there were six stone waterpots set there for the Jewish custom of purification, containing twenty or thirty gallons each. ⁷ Jesus said to them, ‘Fill the waterpots with water.’ So they filled them up to the brim. ⁸ And he said to them, ‘Draw some out now and take it to the headwaiter.’ So they took it to him. ⁹ When the headwaiter tasted the water which had become wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the headwaiter called the bridegroom, ¹⁰ and said to him, ‘Every man serves the good wine first, and when the people have drunk freely, then he serves the poorer wine; but you have kept the good wine until now.’ ¹¹ This beginning of his signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested his glory, and his disciples believed in him. ¹² After this he went down to Capernaum, he and his mother and his brothers and his disciples; and they stayed there a few days.

Cultural Background

- Cana of Galilee: the same village in which Jesus met Nathanael. The village was probably a small one, within about 2 miles of Nazareth, Jesus’ home town.
- Wedding: In first century Jewish weddings, the star of the show is the groom! (Not the bride, as in Western culture.) In ancient Israel weddings were week-long celebrations. The ceremony was paid for by his family. Who came? Probably everybody in the region of Cana and Nazareth. Some sources say that Mary was the sister of the mother of the groom, which might explain Mary’s authority in the situation. This would have made Jesus the cousin of the groom.
- Abundance of wine: The prophets used abundance of wine as an image of God’s messianic blessing (Is. 25:6, Joel 3:18, Amos 9:13 – 14).

Leader's Notes

1. What was this episode like for each of the following characters?
 - a. Jesus?
 - i. Does he care about the groom? His mom?
 - ii. Timing is an issue. Why does he say, 'My hour has not yet come?'
 - iii. Relationship with mom is an issue. Why does he say, 'Woman'? It's not disrespectful as a term. But he also does not say, 'Mother,' indicating that he is not seeing her as an authority figure over himself.
 - iv. Is this an opportunity to show his disciples something?
 - b. The groom?
 - i. What was this like for him? What's it like to run low on resources?
 - ii. APPLICATION: How do we get exposed in this way?
 - iii. Also, what happened to the six stone jars for purification? They were ruined!
 - iv. What about afterwards?
 - c. The servants?
 - i. What is it like for them to step forward offering what they think is water?
 - ii. APPLICATION: How does serving Jesus allow us to see him pour out his fullness of life to others? Is the reward worth the risk, to you? Why or why not?
 - iii. But can they tell anyone about the miracle afterwards?
 - d. The disciples?
 - i. They just saw a 'chain of communication' from Mary to the servants ('do whatever he tells you'). Where else have they seen a 'chain of communication'? Compare.
 - ii. They see the miracle. What was that like for them?
 - iii. This story suggests to them that they would see Jesus' fullness and glory if they are serving others.
 - iv. They heard from John the Baptist that Jesus has the fullness of the Spirit in him. They have just seen Jesus take Jewish ceremonial jars filled with abundant wine to bless others. The six stone jars probably symbolize Jesus himself, pouring out his life for others. The words 'fullness' and 'filled' (2:7) develops the idea that 'in him was life' (1:4). Here is the possible symbolism:
 1. Six stone jars = symbolizes Jesus' body (the number six symbolizes humanity, created on the sixth day)
 2. Water = what is cleansing, recalls John's water baptism practice
 3. Wine = symbolizes the blessing of God, in particular the Holy Spirit and the joy that are in Jesus. They will see Jesus pour out the fullness of his life – by the Spirit – towards others.
 4. Wine is one of the things that get better with time. God gets better over time. Jesus gets better over time.
2. The disciples saw a 'sign' (2:11). In this context, a 'sign' is an outward, temporary display of an inward, spiritual reality. How does Jesus use this outward sign of fullness in the midst of scarcity to point to an inward reality of his fullness in the midst of scarcity?
 - a. It's not as if the groom could produce that wine again. The moment was a special moment.
 - b. We can't count on miracles happening all the time. Nor is it up to us to create the conditions of fullness. Sometimes we just can't. But we can interpret the sign when it appears. The interpretation is just as important as the occurrence.
 - c. APPLICATION: What outward, temporary signs of Jesus' fullness have you seen, that you can interpret for others?
3. How is this event a sign of Jesus' glory (v.11)?
 - a. Here, Jesus shares his glory with the bridegroom, since the bridegroom benefits from the miracle. Jesus is not stingy with his glory (see Psalm 8:4 – 5; Colossians 1:27).