

## John 2:1 – 12

<sup>1</sup> On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there; <sup>2</sup> and both Jesus and his disciples were invited to the wedding. <sup>3</sup> When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, 'They have no wine.' <sup>4</sup> And Jesus said to her, 'Woman, what does that have to do with us? My hour has not yet come.' <sup>5</sup> His mother said to the servants, 'Whatever he says to you, do it.' <sup>6</sup> Now there were six stone waterpots set there for the Jewish custom of purification, containing twenty or thirty gallons each. <sup>7</sup> Jesus said to them, 'Fill the waterpots with water.' So they filled them up to the brim. <sup>8</sup> And he said to them, 'Draw some out now and take it to the headwaiter.' So they took it to him. <sup>9</sup> 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, <sup>10</sup> 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.' <sup>11</sup> This beginning of his signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested his glory, and his disciples believed in him. <sup>12</sup> 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. State cultural background
  - a. Where: The place is 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.
  - b. When: A 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.
  - c. What: The prophets used abundance of wine as an image of God's messianic blessing (Is. 25:6, Joel 3:18, Amos 9:13 – 14).
  - d. Who: 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.
2. What was it like for each of the following characters?
  - a. Jesus?
    - i. He probably cares about the groom, and the predicament! That's cool right off the bat, in that Jesus cares about everyday people in everyday situations.
    - ii. Timing is an issue. Why does he say, 'My hour has not yet come?' Because his entrance into public ministry would eventually draw him into conflict with Jewish leaders over whether he was the Messiah or not. It would lead to his death. He needed time to train his disciples.
    - 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? Yes! But how?! Look at how Jesus figures out how to do this, ingeniously.
  - b. The groom?
    - i. What was this like for him? What's it like to run low on resources? Embarrassing. Socially shaming. The whole community would remember him forever as, 'the guy who ran out of wine'! Kind of like throwing up in junior high and being remembered forever as, 'that guy/gal who threw up in class!!'
    - ii. For all of us, marriage in particular exposes us. We run low on resources and we start bringing out 'the cheap stuff.'
    - iii. APPLICATION: How does life expose us this way?
    - iv. What about afterwards? He was bewildered. He didn't know what happened behind the scenes. Probably the servants told him later. But he gets to enjoy the glory for that moment. Jesus is not jealous about guarding his glory. He shares some of it with the groom!
    - v. Also, what happened to the six stone jars for purification? They were ruined! After having wine in them, they couldn't be used again. Surely he would have to ask Jesus about ceremonial purification now, and what answers would Jesus give? That he is the one who purifies humanity now, not the stone jars, not the stone Temple (John 2:12 – 25), not the stone tablets on which the Ten Commandments were written. The old covenant does not purify humanity, only the new covenant in Jesus does. God brings out what is better, later, like the wine.
  - c. The servants?
    - i. They took somewhat of a risk. They had to take what they thought was water to the master of the banquet. That's embarrassing by any measure. But their obedience is rewarded!! They get to see a miracle happen!!
    - 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? They know that something miraculous has happened, but they don't want to speak up because they would shame the groom! So they stay silent.
  - d. The disciples?

- i. They see the miracle. They learn the implicit lesson of the servants. Serving Jesus allows them to see Jesus' glory. Jesus pours out his life for others. 'Fullness, filled' (2:7) develops the idea that 'in him was life' (1:4)
  - ii. This story suggests to them that they would see Jesus' fullness and glory if they are serving others.
  - iii. They just saw a 'chain of communication' from Mary to the servants ('do whatever he tells you'). This is a lesson for them, and for us. We are to do whatever he tells us. This is similar to the 'chain of communication' between God to John the Baptist to his disciples to more disciples from John 1:29 – 51.
  - 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. 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 ordinary humanity
    3. Wine = symbolizes the Holy Spirit and 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.
3. 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. Another example: Thanksgiving dinner at my house in 2007. One Thanksgiving one of my housemates invited the local prostitute to dinner. It was a very abundant, full time. It was full of food, since a bunch of different people came and everyone brought something. It was full of great conversation, partly because we also invited a young man from Rwanda to be our guest, and he shared about how God ministered to him and his family during the Rwandan genocide. The woman who was a prostitute in our neighborhood was living in an abandoned house with no heat, and late November in Boston is cold! So it was full of warmth for her in many ways. She asked if she could stay with us in our house. We wound up letting her stay for 2 nights, and then saying that she had to go. My housemate is a single parent, and my wife and I are parents, and we weren't sure about letting this woman into our house with our kids, and the possibility that they'd be alone. She also had medical issues and I felt strongly that she needed to go see a doctor, not just be in our house. But she refused. I wish that I had said that this was a sign of Jesus abundance. It pointed to a deeper inward reality that is in him, which he could share with her. But Thanksgiving was an outward, temporary display of an inward, spiritual reality that is in Jesus.
  - c. Another example: My friend's story in Dorchester, of the oil lasting longer in heating the house than it was really possible. It was an outward, temporary sign of abundance and fullness that points to an inward, spiritual reality in Jesus.
  - d. This way of looking at this sign is more honest. 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.
  - e. APPLICATION: What outward, temporary signs of Jesus' fullness have you seen, that you can interpret for others?