

“Water Into Wine”
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 11 February 2024
 Texts: John 2:1-12

Our text records that **on the third day there was a wedding feast in Cana**. This is the third day after John declared Jesus to be **the Lamb of God**. (John 1:36) The second day Jesus went into Galilee and found Philip who hailed from Bethsaida and Philip found Nathaniel who was from Cana. Nathaniel is the one who identified Jesus as **the Son of God and the King of Israel**—now what was said to Peter on the occasion of his confession of Jesus as the Christ is very apt here: **Blessed are you . . . flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven**. So we have had two revelations which precede further miraculous declarations by Andrew. Therefore we know Jesus is 1. The sacrificial lamb, 2. Son of God, 3. King of Israel, 4. The Messiah and 5. The Christ before Jesus performs His first miracle—that of turning water into wine. There are high claims as well as provocative and head-turningly controversial and please note, as recorded by John, these claims were made before Jesus’ ministry really took off. One implication of this is that part of the journey that these disciples were embarking on would be confirmation, or, if we prefer, verification of Jesus’ divine identity. In other words, the first disciples both knew and, simultaneously did not know the significance of the high claims they made of Jesus!

Now this wedding was held in Nathaniel’s *hometown, Cana*, and this is only the third day, following Jesus’ appearing where John the Baptist was ministering, beyond the Jordan. Andrew and John were the first two disciples who were called at the occasion (John 1:35-39) Then it was Andrew who led Simon Peter to the Lord, declaring, **We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ**.

To flesh this out further, we are told in John 2:1, that the mother of Jesus was present at this wedding to which **Jesus and his disciples were called**. (John 2:1-2) They are there as wedding guests. And it turns out that the wedding hosts ran out of wine (**when they wanted wine** v. 3) Mary reported this to Jesus. Mary had confidence that Jesus could do something about this embarrassing circumstance. She did not suggest that Jesus perform the miracle that followed (the essential change of transforming water into wine). Apparently there were six stone waterpots near at hand, pots used for ritual purification, or ceremonial washings. Jesus improvised and changed these waterpots into wine containers. What he did was change something common, as basic as water, into something quite different, something refined, namely excellent wine. The tasteless was rendered tasty! Between 108 and 162 gallons of the best wine—at least according to the feast master! The feast master cites the bridegroom for inverting the common, local practice, saying, **Every man at the beginning sets forth good wine, and when men have well drunk, then that which is inferior is produced *but* you have saved the best for last!**

There’s a lot more going on here than meets the palate, so to speak. Let’s begin with the rectification of the wedding party’s error (an insufficient supply of wine).

That is a sure way to lose face and that humiliation could lead to some very unhappy circumstances. But is it too much to suggest that perhaps, just perhaps, most marriages all start in the place of defect, or deficiency. Two broken people come together in hopes of a new start, a better future—they are hoping for the best. Or, they are hoping for something better, more hopeful. There is a measure of putting the past behind, overlooking errors, missteps, recklessness even some straying. Perhaps both the bride and the groom are transgressors. And perhaps their circumstances are comparable to plain, old standing water. Such as? How about a mutual lack of a good, healthful emotional life—something that could stand an upgrade, a purification, a cleansing. Maybe there are unconfessed sins, harms that lie unforgiven in the fragile space that was once an innocent and trusting heart. Perhaps there is insecurity, and fear—in hiding, not in the open which drain the entry and hope and promise out of life.

The lack of a proper emotional life—histories of abuse, neglect, abandonment and betrayal, sometimes more imagined than real and sometimes the result of generational sin, sudden death and fatal illnesses—the lack of a proper emotional life can lead to headaches (migraines), ulcers, heart disease, mental illness, and even cancer. Medical research suggest that cancer patients tend to be lonely, disassociated from family, close relatives, tend to have suffered childhood trauma from cruel siblings and meanness. The place where love, sharing, compassionate caring are supposed to be assimilated, imitated, learned and acquired turns out to be deficient in some or in all those things! A poor emotional life, we are told, tends toward disease and poor health, a failure to thrive. And that is the standing water in the waterpots at the wedding where the supply of good wine is wanting.

But Jesus is the one who remedies our deficiency. He heals the sick, mends the broken-hearted. He does the impossible and through his power, his presence, he transmits the love of God from high heaven into the hearts of the bride and groom, the family and the guests. His love propels us towards a better, ruler, deeper and satisfying union—dissolving the bonds of fear, distrust and setting captives free. Where there is a lack of emotional health, Jesus makes up the deficiency! That is an essential change of a radically different order! Jesus confronts the manifest chaos that we are, the forces of disintegration which hurl us toward dead ends and relational disasters, he confronts them head on, balancing the imbalanced—righting things that are off kilter, healing our instability through his power, love and grace.

With regard to this wedding at Cana, all I can say is thank God that Jesus was there. Good wine can deceive us into thinking everything is fine, but Jesus is there actually altering tasteless, stale water into delicious, tasty wine. He takes our emptiness and renders it back as abundance—he does more than enough, his is the way of abundance and blessing. He is the wine with which we toast the bride and groom! How else should we describe the transformation of loveless loneliness to loving grace and isolation and loneliness becomes a house full of company and friends? Jesus at the party makes the party a party. Who else can persuade you to leave your selfish singularity? Who else is able to produce solidarity and motivate us to selfless service for the glory of God and the honor of our King? Who ordained

our coupling union, our one flesh melding? This is Jesus working water into wine. It is still miraculous.

Listen to the wonder of his love! Regardless of our attainment, achievement, education, status, wealth, age, health, looks, nationality gender, race or reputation—regardless, or in spite of any of all, Jesus loves you because he chooses to. It's his choice, receive and welcome it. Your response matters, submit to him, turn your life over and he will change you essentially, utterly and completely. You will become fine wine! Let him make what he will of you, that would be something! Jesus makes somebodies out of everyone he saves. Be inundated in the flood waters of his love—he will wash, cleanse, renew, repair and redeem you. Like a mighty wave it will fall over you and raise you up because Jesus came to mend what's shattered, fix what's broken, repair the bruised, banged up and battered! He can change your content and make you content.

Jesus breaks the relentlessness of hatred, the vengefulness of un-forgiveness and cancels pay back so as to end the recapitulation of evil intentions. He knows a waterpot when he sees one! He alone can bring wholeness to your soul, recalibrate your personality, reintegrate you as a child of God, replenish your strength and refurbish your powers. And, in the end, just like him, you can extend God's love, be God's welcome to others, start the dancing and commence the rejoicing—but not you, as Paul says, rather Christ in you the hope of glory!

Wow and Amen.