

## The Water Into Wine!

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It was time to get ready for the wedding.

Mary, the mother of Jesus, was so excited for this wedding!

From a storage area up high in her home, Mary pulls down a wooden box, sets it on her bed, and slowly opens the lid - like she had found a treasure chest for the first time.

Inside was the wedding garment she would wear to the wedding.

It's not every day one has the opportunity to wear their finest clothes!

Everyone will be dressed up for the occasion and Mary will be just as stylish as anyone!

She lifts the garment from the box, unfolds it and admires it.

The nervous energy is in the air of everyone preening themselves to look their best as such an important event.

Weddings were a big deal! They would typically last seven days! Seven days of feasting!

These were such big events there would be an event planner who oversaw the festivities called the master of the banquet.

They were to ensure everything went off properly - the food, the drink, the ceremonies. There's a lot that goes into planning a wedding and pulling it off without a hitch!

Mary knows the family well and has even helped with some of the planning and preparations. Now it's time for her to partake in some of the celebrations as well.

She glances at her beautiful wedding garment again, breaths a sigh of delight as she pictures it flowing beautifully behind her as she strides along from friend to friend at the banquet.

Then the details of reality and preparation snap her out of her day dream and she yells, "Kids! Are you getting ready? We have to leave soon for the wedding!"

Jesus, his four brothers, his sisters, and his disciples have also been invited to the wedding.

For those of you with kids, I'm sure you can feel Mary's pain trying to get everyone - and herself - ready for the wedding!

Off they went, all dressed up for a party - a party of seven days!

Reading from John chapter 2,

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

*<sup>4</sup> "Woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My hour has not yet come."*

*<sup>5</sup> His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."*

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

*<sup>7</sup> Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim.*

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

*They did so, <sup>9</sup> 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 <sup>10</sup> 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."*

*<sup>11</sup> 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.*

*<sup>12</sup> After this he went down to Capernaum with his mother and brothers and his disciples. There they stayed for a few days." (Jn.2:1-12 NIV)*

Papyrus, the greeting card maker, makes my favourite birthday card.

(Show card)

The front cover shows a police officer who has pulled over a priest.

The police officer asks, "Reverend, have you been drinking?"

"Only water" the Reverend replies

"Then why do I smell wine?" asks the officer.

To which the Reverend replies, "Good Lord! He's done it again!"

A seven day wedding. That's a long feast!

No wonder the wine ran out!

Marriage feasts lasted seven days and guests would arrive each day.

It's likely Jesus and his disciples came later on, closer to the last few days of the wedding.

It was Mary who was invited - likely close friends of the bride and groom's family. Probably went early to help with preparations and be there for anything the family needed.

So she was privy to the situation with the wine.

Good thing!

Wine is very important at social functions.

To run out of wine at a wedding feast would have been extremely embarrassing to the bride and groom and their families.

People would have felt insulted if the wine ran out - this was no small issue!

Have you ever been to a wedding where something bad or extremely unusual happened?

Did you ever forget it?

No.

When you think of that couple and their wedding, what do you think about?

That one thing - not the rest of the event where there were lots of beautiful things like decorations, and food, and the warm loving words of the ceremony - nope, that one bad thing sticks out and steals the show.

About ten years ago I was officiating a wedding and Sasha was invited to it as well.

We've been to a lot of weddings, but we will never forget this one! It had one of those 'steal the show' moments.

After dinner they had the traditional garner belt around the brides' leg removal by the groom before the cutting of the cake.

They placed a chair in the middle of the floor, about 15 feet from the wedding cake.

Such a beautiful wedding cake! One of those multi layered, flowery, perfect looking cakes - and it was big!

The bride sat in the chair, playful music started, and the groom hamming it up, didn't just reach under to pull the belt off her one leg, he went right under the dress!

Now it was one of those big poofy dresses, so that was not the unusual part.

The unusual part was when he lifted her onto his shoulders and stood up!

For most people that would have been a good laugh, to see the bride perched up on the grooms shoulders - however.....

By this time the groom had had a few to many drinks himself and was somewhat tipsy.

Sasha and I just looked at each other as if we could read each others minds!

No sooner did we do this the groom, with bride perched up on his shoulders, standing straight up on his legs, began to lose his balance!

As she started to fall, he started to move his legs quickly to get under her and gain his balance - but she kept falling, and he started to run faster - but she kept falling, and he kept running - Right towards the wedding cake!

Crash!

She came down right on top of the wedding cake and wedding cake table.

Everyone gasped! Then there was silence.

Was she okay, are they hurt - everyone was wide eyed and wide mouthed at what had just happened.

A few people started to rush forward to help them, but before they got there the bride stood up, threw her hands in the air and shouted, "I'm okay!"

And everyone cheered!

Sasha and I just looked at each other thinking "What just happened?"

Well, as you can see, Sasha and I have never forgotten that wedding!

And what do we remember about that wedding? The crash into the wedding cake of course!

A greater disaster loomed over this wedding feast in Cana with the wine running out, and Mary the mother of Jesus sees the storm clouds and does something about it.

"Jesus, they've run out of wine!"

What made Mary go to Jesus?

Growing up Jesus had shown himself to be resourceful.

Not only was he the oldest, but something about how he handled life's problems and issues showed Mary if anyone could find a solution, it was Jesus.

At first glance it seems his reply to Mary his mother is rude - but it isn't.

Calling her woman was not derogatory, and the phrase 'My hour has not yet come' is to be taken as 'I must wait for the right opportunity'.<sup>1</sup>

Clearly she takes no offense and understands that's his way of saying, 'Yes, I will do something about it' - because she tells the servants to do whatever he tells them to do.

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<sup>1</sup> Wilbert Howard, Interpreters Bible Comm. Pg.491.

If she took Jesus' comments as brushing her off or indifference to the wine running out, she would not have instructed the servants to do as he says.

The servants were well aware of Mary's connection with the family and therefore obliged her in every way.

If Jesus says fill the pots with water, that's what we do!

All the way to the brim!

This was no parlour trick - the servants could clearly see the pots were filled to the brim with water.

Once the servants finish as Jesus instructed, he tells them to draw some out and give it to the master of the banquet.

Now the master of the banquet knows wine! Social gatherings are his profession.

He would have strategically chosen the best wine at the beginning of the festival and gradually moved to the bargain bin wine after people are somewhat inebriated on the good stuff.

After tasting the wine, he thinks the groom has pulled a fast one on him by saving the best wine for later on in the feast!

Jesus knows his wine!

Only a select few who were involved in the affair knew anything about it.

The rest of the wedding went off without a hitch.

Jesus has saved the wedding family much embarrassment and ensured great joy remained at their celebration.

After the celebration people started talking about what had happened. The servants who drew the water saw it and told their family and friends, Mary, the master of the feast, then others they told - word spread.

The disciples saw it happen and although they already knew there was something special about Jesus, this reinforced it.

It says in verse 11 the disciples believed in him when they saw it - they trusted him more deeply.

To believe in someone means to trust them.

Trust, faith is not blind - it's based on reputation.

If anyone tells you faith is blind, tell them they're wrong.

Faith, trust, to believe in someone - is not blind, it's based on reputation, on a display of character and power which proves they are worthy to be trusted.

The disciples saw this and thought, "I'll trust in this person, in what they have to say, in what they have to teach."

Verse 11 says *"This was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory."* Which means the beginning, or primary.

It was at the beginning of his launch into public ministry, revealing his glory, the kingdom of God.

Don't you find it interesting that the first miracle of Jesus is to save a party?

To ensure the festivities go on uninterrupted.

We read in Mark's gospel how he did so many healings, and casting out demons that *"As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere."* (Mk.1:45)

Even John at the end of his gospel says, *"Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written."* (Jn.21:25)

Of all the miracles, of all the signs and wonders - John starts with this one.

This is the first one.

Water into wine at a wedding.

What an interesting miracle to start with!

It says a lot about Jesus and a lot about God.

It says God loves a party.

Yes, it's true, that's a very important lesson of this story!

Consider, Jesus and his disciples were invited to the party.

They wanted him to be there. Why?

Because Jesus was fun!

Remember the religious leaders ridiculed Jesus for eating and drinking with people instead of fasting and being somberly serious about prayer and ceremonies?

Remember they ridiculed Jesus for eating and drinking with people of society Rabbi's would never associate with? (Matt.9 ; Mk.2 ; Lk.7)

Jesus loved a social gathering, and he wasn't a 'stick in the mud'.

He fit right in at a party, he fit right in with any crowd!

You know what, I don't tell people that I'm a minister when I meet them - not because I'm embarrassed, but because people act differently when they find out you're a minister.

They aren't themselves.

I've had people come up to me at the gym and apologise for having sworn when we were talking earlier a number of days ago.

"I'm so sorry!" they would say, "I was swearing around you and I didn't realize you were a minister!"

"Ah, my virgin ears!" I would say!

My full time job is a construction manager. It's the same thing with the trades. Many of you are familiar with how many trades people talk. Swearing is part of the daily vocabulary for most.

Same thing, they find out I'm a minister and they immediately call or text to apologize.

But believe me, I'm not singing hymns either when I hit my thumb with the hammer!

There's a false sense of piety that happens in religion where we are not free to be ourselves anymore.

I'm not talking about common social edicate, I'm talking about pretense, that false sense of holiness that sucks the life out of a party.

God's not like that, Jesus is not like that, and this miracle is a great illustration of God's nature of joy and celebration!

Arthur Gossip in the Interpreters Commentary captures this well when he says; *"Christ was there, and they wanted him to be there. They had no fear he would be out of his element, or fail to fit in, or make others uncomfortable.*

*And be sure there was no awkward silence at that part of the table where he sat."* (pg.491)

Everyone felt comfortable around Jesus. They could be themselves, they could have a good time at a party - they didn't have to put on some false sense of holiness to fit in with Jesus.

Not like the other religious leaders. Many of them were unapproachable, they distanced themselves from people who lived lifestyles they didn't approve of.

That's why they were called the Pharisees, which means 'separated ones'.

If you see church people separating themselves from others because they do not approve of their lifestyles, they have become the Pharisees and are nothing like Jesus.

The Pharisees thought 'If we hang out with such people we are condoning their lifestyle'. 'They should change their lifestyle and they will be accepted by God, then we can hang out with them.'

But Jesus says, 'Come hang out with me in hopes you will discover the love of God, then as you place your faith in God, your life will change!'

I don't know about you, but I follow Jesus.

Everyone is welcome to come and worship here with us!

You are invited to the feast, and I hope and pray, every single one of us experience the love of God and find the courage to take the steps of faith the Holy Spirit is calling us to!

God loves a party!

The social dynamics of embarrassment and festivities are important to God.

So important, Jesus breaks the rules for ceremonial washing. Those jars were 'defiled' by Jesus who turned the water into wine.

If those ceremonial jars were used for anything other than water for cleansing, they were defiled.

It shows us that Jesus has his priorities correct - the people and the celebration was more important than following the religious rules of cleansing.

Do our rules get in the way of loving others? Do our rules create barriers between us and other people? Does our sense of right and wrong separate us from others like the Pharisees?

Jesus shows us God's priority is relational. Jesus crossed so many boundaries to reach people, to develop relationships with people.

At this wedding Jesus not only partakes in all the festivities, but ensures they continue.

'Need wine? Oh look, there are these handy dandy jars over here! Oh, but you can't use those, they are holy, set apart for a special purpose! Too bad, this is more important!' and Jesus proceeds to turn the water into wine.

The importance of a wedding is not lost on God.

Marriage and the marriage feast are God's idea.

It symbolizes the union God intends to make with us one day.



God has invited us to become a part of the Trinitarian relational marriage in which God exists eternally - by marriage.

Did you know the church is being prepared as a bride for Christ?

We will one day be joined with God as a bride and groom are joined in marriage.

Revelation 19:7 says, *"Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready."*

Revelation 21:9 says, *"Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb."*

Our marriages symbolize the union God invites us into - it's a big deal!

Weddings are a big deal!

This is important to God!

God is not looking for a casual relationship with us, God wants total commitment.

God demonstrated his commitment to us by dying on the cross - the bride price paid for us to be with him.

You are loved and valued far above what you could possibly imagine.

The price for the bride has been paid, now come. Say yes to God's marriage proposal and place your trust in Him.

God loves a party, God loves you, you're invited.

And by the way, there will be wine!

Amen.