

WATER INTO WINE

John 2:1-11

Not enough wine for the party? Jesus turned water into wine. How about having Him shovel our sidewalk after a big snowstorm or acing a test for us or turning the cost of overhauling a transmission into a \$95 censor or just making our baby sleep through an entire night?

If Jesus could change water into wine for that wedding party in the small village of Cana, why can't He do something for us today? And for that matter, why doesn't He do something really significant? They just had the Miss America contest—where the contestants say they wish for world peace. But if we had our choice from God, would we settle for wine for a party? Why not have Him prevent the shootings at our schools? Why not keep hurricanes from hitting the coast? Why not put an end to world terrorism?

Jesus did other miracles that seemed a lot more significant than changing water into wine. He healed people from leprosy. That not only meant curing them from a disease, but enabling them to return to society, since as lepers they were not allowed to live like “normal” people because of the fear of spreading the disease. Jesus gave sight to the blind and opened the ears of the deaf in a world that had no special training for the handicapped and considered them cursed. He drove demons out of the possessed. He calmed the storm so His disciples would not drown. Those things were very serious. And what could be more serious than bringing the dead back to life? Feeding the 5,000 may not have been a life and death situation, but there were a lot of people and without food there could have been serious problems with them having the strength to walk home. But turning water into wine? So what if people don't get enough wine for a wedding? What is that compared with bringing Jairus' daughter, the son of the widow of Nain, or Lazarus back to life? Why did Jesus do this miracle? And John tells us this was His first one!

We see Mary telling Jesus that there was no wine. Did Jesus do this just to keep His mother happy? Notice that Jesus didn't jump at the chance to do this. He said, “Dear woman, why do you involve Me?” I wonder how our moms would feel if we called them “dear woman,” but in Jesus' time this was not sarcastic, but showed deep respect. Then Jesus tells her, “My time has not yet come.” Jesus' miracles were not about Him using His power as God to simply do things. If Jesus and Mary were at a wedding in Cana, it probably involved relatives. It was a family matter, and Mary cared for her family. But Jesus' miracles were more than that.

John calls the turning of water into wine not Jesus' first “miracle,” but Jesus' first “sign.” Jesus' miracles were always in response to human need. He never did them to show off. That's exactly what the devil tempted Him to do when He told Jesus. “Tell these stones to turn into

bread.” But in responding to peoples’ needs, Jesus did show who He is as the Son of God. They were “signs,” that witnessed that He is God.

When John the Baptist was put into prison, he began to wonder if Jesus really was the Messiah. Jesus told John’s disciples, “Tell him the blind see, the lepers are healed, the deaf hear, and good news is preached to the poor.” The Old Testament said the Messiah could do signs like this. Jesus’ miracles showed that He really was the Messiah, the Son of God. John tells us about turning water into wine that, “Jesus revealed His glory, and His disciples put their faith in Him.” The Jewish rabbis had emphasized that if the Messiah was really from God, signs were needed to prove it. Miracles were associated with Moses and the prophets who proclaimed God’s Word. After Jesus ascended into heaven, apostles like Peter and Paul were given the power to do miracles—to prove that their message was not their own, but from God. Jesus says later in John’s Gospel, “The miracles I do in My Father’s name spoke for Me.”

Yet, Jesus never did His miracles just to “prove it.” His enemies challenged Him to do that, but He said, “I will give you no sign but the sign of Jonah.” He was referring to His resurrection from the dead on Easter. Just as Jonah came out of the great fish-out of that “prison”—Jesus came out of His tomb. When Herod asked Jesus to do a miracle, which would have gotten Jesus released, He did nothing.

What we see for us today in Jesus’ first sign of changing water into wine is that 1.) He is truly the Son of God. We are in the Epiphany season when we hear a lot of stories about Jesus’ miracles. We celebrated last Sunday when He was baptized and His Father said from heaven. “This is My beloved Son.” And in six weeks we will hear about how He appeared all shiny and bright on a mountain with Moses and Elijah, the two big heroes of the Old Testament. All of this shows that He is God. And all of those signs point to the biggest sign—Easter. Easter is the full proof that not only Jesus the Son of God, but that His death on the cross took away all our sins and all that He promises to us is true.

But 2.) there is another thing I think we can see in the sign of turning water into wine. This was not a life or death situation. This was not a real emergency, though you might think that at a wedding. Yet, Jesus helped. What we can see is that Jesus came to this world, died on the cross, and rose on Easter for all of our lives—not just the emergencies.

Often we treat Jesus as something for emergencies or as a spiritual 911. We go on with our lives and only turn to him when things go bad. Theologians call that making Jesus, “a God of the gaps.” But Jesus came for all of our lives, the ordinary as well as the emergencies.

We have a prayer circle here at church like many others. It is a wonderful ministry that allows even people who are homebound to be involved. Yet, what so often happens is that the requests are all about sickness or death or every now and then a disaster. They are all about

emergencies. It is great to share those concerns in prayer. But what about the rest of our lives? What about prayers that our cars will work on a cold morning or that we are healthy today or that we have a job or that we can go to college or that we have a family? Jesus came not only for the hospital and dead bed, but for weddings, for the commute to and from work, for conversations at the supper table, for both big tests and days we can sleep in because the professor can't make class.

Christians often struggle with their faith because they feel guilty about the time they spend with God. They see life like a pie chart. How much time should they give God? We are supposed to sleep at least 8 hours, need to work at least another 8, and need time to do things like eat, wash, and travel. But the time that is all done, what time is there to give for God. Maybe in a monastery I can spend most of my waking hours thinking about God, but how can I as a student, an employee, a parent?

But Jesus didn't come for just some time in our lives like going to church, devotion time, or going to Sunday School. He came for all of our lives. He came not to be a large chunk of our pie chart, but to be at the center of all we do. He is there to give us sleep as we rest in His protection—"Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to keep." He is here to feed us physically as we nourish our bodies. He came to be there as we study and work and change diapers. He is there not only in sickness and death and emergencies, but in the everyday life we face each 24 hours.

Turning water into wine—He does that as we live each day in His forgiveness, as our lives have been turned from a desperate, hopeless struggle against death into the certainty of life forever with Jesus.