

John 2:1-11 “What We are Waiting For”

SEVEN SIGNS

Hello, my name is Seth Stewart and I am the pastor of Student Ministries here, and if you are asking me why I am up here preaching today instead of Sam. I have been asking myself that same question for about 2 weeks now. I am about 8 shades of terrified and one of the only comforts I have had recently is this great story about Charles Spurgeon preaching at his grandfather's church. Charles Spurgeon is this world class preacher and author, and his grandfather recognizing his sons skill said "Here comes my grandson! He can preach the Gospel better than I can, but you cannot preach a better Gospel, can you, Charles?" So while I may not preach better than Sam, I cannot preach a better gospel. So I decided to land where all my security comes from anyway, and talk to you about Jesus, and the Gospel that he heralds from the book of John.

Over the course of the next several times that I do get the opportunity to preach, I want to show you the seven sign-miracles of John. In the book of John, before Jesus dies, John gives us 7 different miracles that Jesus performed, and only seven.

1. Turning water into wine (John 2:1-11)
2. Healing the official's son in Capernaum (4:46-54)
3. Healing the paralytic at Bethesda (John 5:1-18)
4. Feeding the 5000 (John 6:5-14)
5. Walking on water (John 6:16-24)
6. Healing the man born blind (John 9:1-7)
7. Raising of Lazarus (John 11:1-45)

And the point of these vignettes, is to help us believe. This is exactly what John says himself in 20:30:

“Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

These seven miracles are meant to help us believe. These signs show us, in different ways, and by different methods, who Jesus and what his salvation is like. And the first picture, the first vision we have of who Jesus is, and what he is like is found in John 2:1-11. So let's read that together.

On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples. When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.” And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come.” His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.”

Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to the servants. “Fill the jars with water.” And they filled them up to the brim. And he said to them, “Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast.” So they took it. When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom and said to him, “Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now.”

This the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.

GUILTY FEASTING

If any of you are interested, I would highly recommend listening to Tim Keller preach on this same passage. He was extremely helpful as I studied this passage for myself.

Advent is a season of waiting. Of not only looking back to the first coming of Jesus, but also looking forward to, and waiting for his second. When the name Emmanuel, won't merely be a hope, but a statement of fact - forever. God *is* with us. So as we look into John 2, we must ask ourselves, what does John tell us that we waiting for? What does John expect us to see in Jesus, that we should hope for. What does John picture our salvation to be like? And the first thing we learn, is that heaven is a feast.

One of my favorite hobbies is eating, so Thanksgiving, is obviously one of my favorite holidays. But my favorite part about this time of year is that the eating doesn't ever, really stop. We have Thanksgiving, then we have Thanksgiving left overs, and then it's almost Christmas time, and so it's time to start baking cookies every week, and drinking hot chocolate on the weekend, and then you know it's Christmas Eve Dinner at the in-laws, and then Christmas-day lunch with your family, and then Christmas leftovers, and Christmas candy you accumulated that you can't let go to waste. And then... it's new years. And I mean we have gorged ourselves for so long, one more party can't hurt right? And as we look back over our newly formed love handles we realize that maybe, we have eaten to much. But it was worth it right?

The story I just read is a story about a very similar kind of feasting. A feasting that is over the top, and self-indulgent but the difference in this story, is that it's not grandma making you fat. It's the fact that Jesus is the one keeps that party going. And this should strike us as really strange. We normally feel a little guilty about the kind of indulgence we have during this time of year. But Jesus comes along and almost seems to bless it.

I think it's safe to say (no matter what else is being communicated here) that John doesn't start his book with a story we expect. We expect a story about mighty power, but he doesn't start with Jesus walking on water, or feeding the 5000, or raising Lazarus from the dead. He starts with Jesus making sure people feast more. He starts with Jesus turning water into wine. John is often thought of as the Gospel for the world. It wasn't written for a particular people group, or a specific nation, but for anybody and everybody who would listen. John wanted the whole world to know that Jesus turned water into wine.

And the fact that this story is the first of Jesus' signs recorded is incredibly important. ***It means that John wanted us to see turning water into wine as the primary or first way are to understand Jesus and his ministry. John wants us to know that before following Jesus is ever about carrying crosses, before it is ever about sacrificing it is first about a feast. It is first about a wedding.***

So we have to ask, what does a wedding say about Jesus? How does a wedding, tell us what we are waiting for?

A WEDDING GONE WRONG

Imagine you are there, a Jewish wedding. As incredible as my wedding was, it wasn't anything like this. While my friends and family were invited to my wedding, the whole village would have been invited to this one. I had a cool venue but Cana in Galilee is close to the lake. It's probably

beautiful, the sun might be setting. (And I am just speculating here, but the lighting was such that you would have gotten at least 50 of likes on Instagram.) My wedding lasted for a few hours, this one probably lasted a week. A whole week, of being with your friends and loved ones, enjoying the festivities, and of course - drinking wine. But Jesus' Mother discovers a problem.

There is no more wine at this wedding. Now this doesn't sound a like a massive deal to us, who really needs an open bar? But back then this was a really awkward problem. The groom was responsible. If the groom failed in his responsibilities to provide wine for the wedding, he would be shamed. The man who can't provide for his own wedding, most certainly couldn't provide for his family. Imagine the kinds of rumors that would spread through the crowd. His one job, and he didn't do it. Poor girl.

Now when Jesus is told this by his Mother, he responds in a very strange way. "Woman. what does this have to do with me. My hour has not yet come." (v4) Mary apparently doesn't understand or seems to not hear and immediately turns to the servants and tells them to do whatever Jesus says. Jesus then tells them to fill up some jars with water which, when poured out turn into wine and the party is saved.

Now here is what many people think. Many people think this is a story about Jesus obeying his mother. That Jesus didn't want to do a miracle, and then his Mom asked him to do one, and so he did. And the point is - "even God obeyed his Mom! We should too."

While I think obeying your parents is very important, I don't think that's what this miracle is about. I have already talked about the importance of this first miracle. It acts as a manifesto, telling us who Jesus is, and what his salvation is about. So much so that John doesn't even call this a miracle at all, he calls it a "sign." A sign of who Jesus is, what he brings, and what we are waiting for.

Besides do you really think that God will be nagged into doing a miracle? Henpecked into introducing his ministry and his salvation? No. Of course not. God doesn't flip flop on the timings of his miracles. He has plans and he carries them out perfectly each and every time. Later on in the book of John, Jesus will say exactly this. "No one takes [my life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down." (10:18) And in the book of Acts we see the same. Jesus was "delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God..." (Acts 2:23) So in turning water into wine something more is going on.

THE DISTRACTED JESUS

I don't think Jesus is nagged into doing a miracle. I think Jesus is distracted. If you've been to a wedding you know what that's like, especially if you are single. You see the celebration and the groom standing there, the preacher smiling. You hear the music and the bride walking down the aisle. And the whole time you are wondering, "what will my wedding be like, will it be as beautiful, who will my wife be, what colors should I use? "

While I do not think Jesus was thinking those exact thoughts. Jesus was single, and he was at a wedding. I think in the moment his Mom tells him the wine has run out. Jesus is thinking about his wedding day. The day when he will be with his bride, the church. Us believers, you and me. But more specifically, he is thinking about what it will take to provide wine at his wedding.

Whether or not Jesus is distracted may be up for speculation but the Bible will tell us over and over again that Jesus does indeed think of and call himself a bridegroom, a husband. And that we, the church are his bride. In fact, in the last chapters of Revelation when we finally see God

in heaven. It's described as a wedding. The wedding supper of the Lamb. At the end of all things once the Devil is defeated, and all evil banished Jesus says that he will see us as "a bride adorned for her husband." (Revelation 21:2)

I really do think Jesus is thinking about his wedding day here. Because on that day He will wipe away every tear, and death will be no more. There will be no more crying or pain, because all those former things will have passed away. God will make all things new. You know we always think of a marriage, as a new beginning. After the "I do's" everything is different, and nothing was like it was before. And heaven will be very similar. In Revelation 21:5 God shouts: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega the beginning and the End." All my purposes have come to pass, death has been defeated, my people are at my side, and justice has been done. And then he says something very interesting... "And all who are thirsty will drink." I think Jesus is thinking about when his bride will be with him forever, and when we will be satisfied with the wine he provides. When we will drink freely from him.

And here is how I know that is in fact what he is thinking about. Look at v4 again.

"Woman. What does this have to do with me, my hour is not yet come."

That phrase "my hour" or "the hour" is used all throughout John in 7:30, 8:20, 12:23,27, 13:1, and 17:1 and each time, in every case it refers to Jesus death.

When Mary comes to Jesus and says they have no more wine. Jesus doesn't respond with. It's not time for me to do a miracle yet. Mary says, we have no more wine. And Jesus says: "Mom, It's not time for me to die yet." Jesus is thinking about how the only way he gets his wedding, is if he is crucified, if his hour comes.

This is why this miracle is important. This isn't Jesus fixing a faux-pas. This is Jesus showing us how we get us to his wedding day. How we experience a new beginning, and how we experience what we are waiting for - indestructible wedding day joy.

So I want to point out three things related to us experiencing wedding day joy:

1. Jesus becomes the master of the feast.
2. Jesus becomes not merely the wine, but the wine poured out.
3. Because Jesus is our true husband.

So the first thing Jesus does, is he becomes the true master of the Feast.

THE LORD OF THE FEAST

In this story, the master of the feast was the one who tasted the wine and said it was better than all other wine. We would call him an emcee. He was the hired life of the party. He was the guy in charge of making sure people had fun, and were dancing, and playing games. He was in charge of the wine, and the food. He made sure the week ran smoothly and that people enjoyed themselves. But in this story, this man can't do his job. This guy can't provide the wedding day joy. So Jesus has to.

This man fails to provide for the wedding. So Jesus takes his place. Jesus intervenes on this man's behalf and becomes the master of the feast himself and provides wine from water. What I want us to see is that this is us. There are any number of ways we try to be our own master of the feast, and provide for our own joy. However, in all of our searching for fulfillment and satisfaction in trifles like sex, or drink, or people we always seem to come up short, the happiness always seems to run out. The joy doesn't last. We try to save ourselves, we try to

provide for our own happiness, our own joy but it never seems to work. The wine always seems to run out. In this story Jesus comes to you and says, let me take your place, let me be the one to provide for you total fulfillment, total satisfaction, and total salvation. I am the true Lord of the Feast. I am the one who provides wine that doesn't run out.

Don't you see John wants us to know that before following Jesus is about carrying crosses, and sacrifice. It is first about Jesus preparing a feast, and providing wedding day joy. Jesus first miracle declares loudly. ***When all your efforts to provide for your own happiness have failed I am the one who provides the only lasting wedding day joy. John is showing us, that to get us to our wedding day, Jesus must become our Lord of the Feast.***

This is what we are waiting for a feast of joy that we don't have to prepare.

THE WINE

Secondly, Jesus becomes not merely the wine, but the wine poured out.

I think it is fascinating that when Scriptures wants to communicate a certain depth of emotion, or appreciation, or intimacy with something, it often talks about it in relation to taste.

Psalms 19:10 "[Your words are] sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb."

Psalms 34:8 "Taste and see that the Lord is good..."

Psalms 119:103 "How sweet are your words to my taste! Yes, Sweeter than honey to my mouth"

Hebrews 6:4-5 "...those who have tasted the heavenly gift..."

1 Peter 2:3 "...tasted the kindness of the Lord."

Hebrews 2:9 "But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone."

I also think it is fascinating that Jesus begins his ministry by turning water into wine. And that when the Holy Spirit begins his ministry in Acts 2, the closest parallel a non-believing world has for the intensity of experience the Christian's are under is drunkenness. Paul will echo this in Ephesians 5:18 when he says don't get drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit.

I think it is significant then, that Jesus sets himself up as the one who provides not only wine for this wedding, but the *best tasting* wine. I think both John and Jesus want us to know that the salvation Jesus offers, the wine that he brings, is completely refreshing, it is totally sweet, and absolutely satisfying. It is deep rich fudge, and everything else is skim milk souring on the counter. This is the promise of Christianity's God. That he will be your ultimate satisfaction.

Jesus makes the best wine in Cana in Galilee, because he wants to show us that no matter where we live he is our best and most fortifying libation. We say it often this way, Jesus is better. Jesus provides the better wine. And when the pleasures of this world are compared to the wine of Jesus they fail utterly. As believers, in this kind of God we should be hunting for new tastes. The same way beer geeks and wine snobs sniff merlots and detect a certain variation of hops Christians should spend their lives finding, tasting, and imbibing in the promised riches, flavor and depth to be found in Jesus. The wine that is better than all the others. Isn't this what we are waiting for, a satisfaction and joy so deep that once tasted we never have to look for anything more again?

But Jesus' wine, comes at a cost. His hour is yet to come.

Look at the jars in verse 6. These aren't just any stone jars, they are for the "Jewish rites of purification." There was a law in Israel that said before any Jew could go into the temple they needed to wash themselves. And this law was supposed to teach the Israelites that they were sinners who needed to be cleaned before they could enter into God's presence. When Jesus chooses these specific jars as the one to provide the wine from. He knows what he is doing. He is telling everybody watching how ultimately we will enter into God's presence and taste wedding day joy.

We can't come to God until we are cleaned. Yet not cleaned with water, but with wine.

Just like the jars of water were poured out and wine flowed. Jesus' life, his water, will be poured out and his blood will flow. And it's by drinking that blood, that strong wine, that we are saved, cleaned, and have access to God's joy-filled, wedding-day presence. This is why in John 6 it says "Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up in the last day." You see, It is by Jesus death our life is given. And by his sorrow our joy. And by his water, our wine. Jesus is better than all other pleasures. Drink and you will have eternal life.

This is what we are waiting for, guaranteed joy from another's sacrifice.

THE GROOM

I hope you recognizing this miracle for the *sign* that it is. This sign has already shown us, that Jesus is "Lord of the Feast" and "The cup poured out" and "The Better Wine" and "The one that brings wedding day joy." But this miracle tells us even more. It tells us even more about who Jesus is and who we are. It tells us why he does all this. This sign show us that Jesus does all this because he is our true husband and we are his true bride.

To paraphrase Tim Keller. I am sure many of you have been to weddings, but very few of you have gotten to look closely at the husband's face when he sees his bride for the first time. Looking down the aisle as his wife waits behind double doors, expectant, sweaty and nervous. But when the doors open, and he finally sees her. He is always blown away and the bride is always always beautiful. No matter how attractive that woman is really, to the husband, she has never looked more beautiful.

There are a lot of names God gives himself, and while they tell us a lot about him these names also tell a whole lot about how God sees us. He calls himself the Good Shepherd, and we aren't sheep. He is King, and we are his subjects. He is the Father, we are his children. All these make sense for a God who is really as big as God. But the name that should be most surprising to us, is Husband. All throughout Scripture Jesus is the groom. Jesus sees himself as the groom waiting on stage, and he sees us as the bride walking down the aisle.

The same way I saw Erica on October 22nd 2011. Jesus will see his bride, his church, you and I, believers, as absolutely stunning, and as if nothing else matters. And no matter what we look like in reality, to Jesus, we will have never looked more beautiful.

The ultimate reason Jesus provides the wedding day joy is because of the sacrifice of his blood. That's why we are offered complete and total acceptance. Jesus isn't just the Lord of the Feast providing the wine and the joy he is also the groom pouring out love and acceptance towards his new bride.

For many of you, that seems to good to be true. And you say to yourself ‘There is no way that God sees me as a spotless bride on a wedding day. Not after what I have done, not with my secrets. Not with the skeletons I feed in my closet.’ And you convince yourself that God’s love cannot be so unconditional because you look around you and you see that everybody else judges you based on how you stack up to their standards of intelligence, coolness, or success. In fact you do the same thing to yourself. Continually rehearsing and reminding yourself that you are not like, and not as good as those around you. And you believe if that is true of everyone you know, if that is true of my own internal life, how on earth can it be true that God loves me without regard to these standards?

If that is you let me say this. ‘Never mind who you are.’ Nothing from this story leads me to believe that Jesus is checking the individual worth of the people he pours out his love on, and calls his bride.

It’s Jesus who is the Lord of the Feast, and It’s Jesus who provides the wine. It’s Jesus who pours out his life, and Jesus who offers wedding day joy. In this story there is only one person completing and fulfilling all the standards, and it’s Jesus. The thing we do in response is not measuring up, is not becoming more successful, is not becoming more holy. But it is the response of all those others attending the wedding.

It’s drinking. It’s drinking the wine. It’s simply by drinking that we are promised acceptance.

This is the good news of the gospel. It’s by drinking the eternal life Jesus provided. That abundant 150 gallons of the best tasting, up-to-the-brim, 200 proof wine of grace. It’s by tasting, and seeing that the salvation Jesus offers is good, that we are saved, and that we are loved.

That’s all we do. All salacious secrets dissolve in the wine, all past actions and sins are forgotten memories with Jesus. You see to drink is to do nothing but receive. To drink means that you are being given life and joy and by someone else cup, and all you do is take what someone else has provided. We simply drink, we simply believe. And by our faith in Jesus as our ultimate joy, our ultimate acceptance, we have life. You see It doesn’t matter who you are, or what you have done, or how good you are. God is. Jesus is. And his love for you is not based on you, it’s based on Jesus’ sacrifice, his blood, his wine poured out. Isn’t this what we are waiting for? Unconditional acceptance, indestructible joy? This is the hope of Advent. That we have a messiah that does indeed provide the wedding day joy, regardless of whether we deserve it or not.

SO THAT YOU WOULD BELIEVE

In conclusion, I want to bring your attention to the last verse in this passage, verse 11.

This the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.

This is the question we must ask, what did the disciples believe about him? That Jesus had power to turn water into wine? That Jesus was a great miracle worker? Well obviously he did, but that’s not what John has in mind. Let me remind you of what I started with, John 20:30.

“Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

This is why John wrote the book, this is why John recorded these miracles. So that we would believe that Jesus isn't merely a miracle worker. ***That we wouldn't merely believe that he has the power to turn water in to wine. But that he is God's son, God incarnate, whose blood would be spilled as a substitutionary sacrifice and that by his blood, our wine, we would have everlasting life, indestructible wedding day joy, and total access to God's presence.***

This is what the disciples believed and this is what this text demands us to believe. Whether a believer or non-believer.

If you are not a Christian here today, and you want to experience the indestructible wedding day joy of Jesus, if you are tired of being dissatisfied with this world, and are ready to drink from the up-to-the-brim wine of Jesus. You must do two things:

Admit you have nothing, and know salvation is yours.

Mary said it. "There is no wine." Admit you are in need of a savior, that there is no wine in you that can bring eternal life. Admit you cannot provide your own happiness. Admit that you need to be saved, and can't do it on your own.

And then, know salvation is yours.

The master of the feast did. The wedding guest applauded him, for Jesus work. They just assumed he provided the wine, when it was Jesus the whole time. And that's exactly what we do. Even though it isn't our work, it's not our righteousness, even though it is not us living perfect lives, even though it isn't us dying on the cross, even though it's not us earning it. We still get to drink the wine, we still get the wedding joy! If you are not a Christian, it's that simple. The question is, what are you waiting for?

But if you are a Christian, and you do believe in Jesus as your savior and source of eternal life, that does not mean your battle for belief is over. Because if we have learned anything from this passage, we have learned that following Jesus doesn't end with following him, it ends with our joy in him. "Taste and see that the Lord is good."

You must ask yourself is your life spent in light of the wedding day joy Jesus promises? Do you drink him up in the expectation that he is a groom with open arms and wide expectant eyes? Do you feast on the Word, do you imbibe in prayer, do you satiate yourself in worship? ***Do you treat Jesus like the best wine stored in jars 30 gallons deep and filled up to the brim? Or as John Piper said: have you nibbled for so long at the table of the world. Your soul is stuffed with small things, and there is no room for the great?***

Let me encourage you, regardless of your appetite, begin your feasting today. We are about to sing one last song so, worship the God who promises to satisfy with the wedding day joy of Jesus, who promises to satisfy with abundant life. A life not absent of sorrow, but full of joy.