

Fully Revealed Kingdom

John 2:1-11 (ESV)

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Word of God for today is from the Gospel reading, the 2nd chapter of John, the story of Jesus' sign of grace at the wedding in Cana of Galilee.

Let us pray,
May the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

You can imagine the shock and horror on the bride and groom's face that night in Cana of Galilee: "They ran out of wine?" There's the shock and horror of ruining the festivities. There's the embarrassment of not planning well enough or not having the foresight. Now, imagine if we were to run out of wine one Sunday at our heavenly banquet, the Lord's Supper. I would not want to see the horror on Pr Wright's face. Jesus really did that couple a good deed by making sure they had enough wine. He allowed the festivities to be continued; the joy to abound. He saved face for the bride and groom. It's a nice story. But, it's more than that. Through this benevolent gift, Jesus, the Son of God, showed his glory. He gave his disciples a sign of his grace. Jesus fully revealed to his disciples the kingdom of God.

There is more to the story because the Gospel writer gives us an important watchword: "sign". St. John wrote, "**This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory.**" God gives signs to his people to show his own character, the character of the merciful one. Throughout the Bible God appears; he speaks; he does wonderful acts; he gives witness and evidence for all to trust in and believe. Chief of these signs was the plagues and punishments towards Pharaoh and Egypt because they would not let go of the Israelites. While for them it was punishment and judgment because of the wicked Pharaoh, these signs were for the Israelites an important testament of God's love. Therefore, throughout the Bible God is known as the "Lord who brought you up from the house of Egypt." The sign of the plagues and the Exodus became what the faithful held onto as the way of knowing who their God was.

So what is it that we learn of Jesus and his glory through this sign and miracle? We learn that Jesus ushers in a new creation, that Jesus manifests a new testament, and that Jesus accomplishes this by his holy cross. And this sign which Jesus gives is for your faith.

Throughout the first chapter of John's Gospel, there's a lot of signs which point to a new creation. The Word which created all things has come down to enter into creation. Those who were born once of man, now are reborn as children of God. Jesus as the new

man gives a new name to Simon (now called Peter) just as Adam the first man gave names to all the living creatures. And now we come to a re-creation of that day six of creation: when man and woman were made by God. Here the evangelist says, **“On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples.”** This “third day” is the third day after the three days of appearances Jesus made to John the Baptist and his disciples. Thus, this is the sixth day of Jesus' ministry. On the same day of creation in which man and woman were made through Jesus, the Word of God, Jesus now attends a wedding where man and woman are becoming one flesh.

Our Lord's presence at this wedding blesses and confirms his renewing of creation. God was not satisfied in leaving man in your sad, cursed state. He was not content in seeing you suffer the consequences of death and sin. God was more than not satisfied. He was disappointed. He was frustrated. He was even angry and jealous over your condition. As we will see, Jesus' appearance in Cana will confirm that this new marriage, this new creation, this new reality for man and woman will be far more wonderful and amazing than the sad condition in which man had found himself. Jesus attends this wedding to create a new man and a new woman, a new wedding, a new state of bliss greater than the bliss found within the holy grounds of the garden of Eden.

When our Lord was faced with the disappointed failure of the bride and groom running out of wine for their festivities, he richly blessed them with an extravagant amount of wine. St. John records, **“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.’”** I want to mark for you two things: how much wine Jesus produced and the quality of said wine, for they show you Jesus' character and how he has come to bless you. Our Lord had the servants fill 6 stone jars of 20 to 30 gallons each. That is a possible 120 gallons of wine, or 600 bottles of wine. Even for a large wedding reception (and one where they've already run out of wine), this is a lot! And it wasn't just wine; it was *good* wine.

This abundance was not just for the wedding party to abuse. Yes, that is the evil possibility we still hold within our flesh. Good food we abuse until it makes us feel sick to our stomach. Good wine we abuse to make fools out of ourselves or even to destroy our bodies. Jesus' miracle points to the future day, the day after the end of days, when man will enjoy the richest of foods and the most delectable of wines in an unmeasured amount, and it will be good. The joy will never end. The mirth and laughter will not stop.

Even if that was not realized with the wedding at Cana of Galilee, even if there was still an abuse of God's good gifts, our Lord wants to show his disciples the reason why he has come: to grant all the benefits of his kingdom. This new covenant, this new testament which God's people will receive by the hand of Jesus, is greater than any of the blessings they had already received from the hand of God. Remember, this miracle at the wedding was the first of Jesus' signs. This is the beginning of his ministry. He means to show what the rest of his work will look like until he accomplishes everything necessary to establish the kingdom of God. And do we not behold ever greater things to come from our Lord? The healing of the lame, the healing of the blind, the raising of the dead, the cleaning of lepers, the exorcisms of the demon-possessed, all of these point to the amazing and wonderful reign of God. And all of this is prefigured by this miracle of miracles, the turning of water into wine.

Yet, you know this abundance does not come out of nowhere. No, this abundance is inseparably tied to this holy sign: the cross of Jesus. Jesus acknowledges this within our story, within his appearance at the wedding. When his mother asks Jesus for help, he responds, "**My hour has not yet come.**" Throughout the narrative which John the Evangelist constructs, Jesus' talk of "his hour" is very important. At different times and places, Jesus connects his teaching and his miracles with the all important hour which is coming. What is this hour? As we learn from Jesus this hour is the hour when all true believers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth, when the Son of God will raise all the dead, when the Son of God will be lifted up on the cross and show his full glory, when Jesus will depart to his Father and prepare room for his disciples, when his disciples will face persecution for preaching of Jesus. This hour encapsulates everything Jesus has come into his creation to accomplish: chief of all his glorification by saving the world on the cross. Even though our Lord rebukes his mother, seemingly denying her petition to give them more wine, he does help her and he does, through this miracle, point forward to that final hour, where all his work will be finished.

Even though you did not attend this magnificent wedding (maybe the details make you envious of those who did), you too are invited to behold the glory of Jesus. The disciples saw everything which occurred, were amazed, and believed in Jesus because he manifested his glory. We see within the characters of this story what a proper response of faith looks like. One, we see it within the character of Jesus' mother, and two, within the character of the disciples. What is common among both is the way Jesus manifests his glory although remaining hidden. Only the eyes of faith see his wonder. The servants who had to draw the water, they knew. The disciples who saw Jesus give the commands, they knew. The mother of Jesus, who made the request, she knew. But, the master of the feast remained oblivious. He was surprised that such good wine would be served last! The bride and groom too were unaware how their problem was resolved. Jesus was not there for his own showmanship. He was not there for parlor tricks or for mere amusement. He was there to manifest the kingdom of God. He was there to show

the glory of the only-begotten Son of God so that all who look upon him might believe and have everlasting life.

The other example of faith in this miracle is the mother of Jesus. She was the one who originally made known the problem to our Lord: **“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.’”** When the mother of Jesus had heard the predicament the wedding couple was in, she turned to the only one she knew could help. Notice how she petitions her son, the Son of glory. She lays the problem at his feet, but allows him to do as he wills. She doesn’t command him, as if she had any authority over God (though maybe she could cling to her authority as a mother). She does not whine or complain. She says, “They have no wine.” Our Lord reinforces this lesson upon her so that she might not have any confidence in herself. Our Lord distances himself by calling her woman and by questioning her motives and intentions. He intends for her (and for all us believers) to understand what is his appropriate work. He has come for his hour. He has come for his cross of glory. He has come to draw all people to himself. He has come to cast out the prince and ruler of this world, the father of lies. Even though he seems to deny her request, the mother of Jesus does not waver in her trust of him. She still knows that he knows what is best. So, she tells the servants, **“Do whatever he tells you.”** She lets him have mercy. She lets him show goodness to the bride and groom. She lets him decide how he will make the kingdom of God appear and be seen by all who believe. This is an illustration for how you too come to the Lord of mercy. Though at times, the Lord might deny or redirect your prayers, he is doing it to direct you towards his ultimate purpose and will for you: eternal life. That is what he is most concerned about. He is most concerned that you would partake of the eternal wedding feast between himself and his bride, the Church.

God has given you a sign and testament for you to hold dearly. Through his gracious gift of an over-abundance of wine, our Lord hands to you evidence that he has come to re-create, that he has come to bless, that he has come to enact his kingdom and rule. This is not a meager or soft kingdom. It is an amazing and wonderful rule because God has come to give more than man ever lost by his disobedience. This new sign and testament for you to believe, just as Jesus’ disciples did, requires the gift of faith. It requires a trust just as the mother of Jesus showed. It requires knowing the majesty of Jesus is for your benefit and for your glory Amen.

May the peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.