**The Lord of the Banquet Series**

**“The Invitation”**

**John 2.1-12**

**Introduction**

This morning we begin a new four-part series on Jesus’ first miracle of turning the water into wine at the wedding at Cana in Galilee recorded in John 2.1-12. Let’s begin by ending the text in John’s Gospel.

*On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there;**and both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding.**When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to Him, “They have no wine.”**And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what does that have to do with us? My hour has not yet come.” His mother said to the servants, “Whatever He says to you, do it.”**Now there were six stone water pots set there for the Jewish custom of purification, containing twenty or thirty gallons each.* *Jesus said to them, “Fill the water pots with water.” So they filled them up to the brim. And He said to them, “Draw some out now and take it to the headwaiter.” So they took it to him. When the headwaiter tasted the water which had become wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the headwaiter called the bridegroom,**and said to him, “Every man serves the good wine first, and when the people have drunk freely, then he serves the poorer wine; but you have kept the good wine until now.” This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him. After this He went down to Capernaum, He and His mother and His brothers and His disciples; and they stayed there a few days.*

Next week we will consider “The Wedding” when we will reflect on the redemptive significance behind the wedding ceremony. Then we will look at “The Banquet” and consider our participation in the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. And lastly look at “The Better Wine” and see why the Lord chose this miracle as His first miracle. But this morning I want us to consider “The Invitation” and ask, “What is the significance behind those invited to this wedding at Cana of Galilee?”

**The Invitation**

Our main text for today’s message is verse one and two of John chapter two. *On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there; and both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding.* (Jn.2.1-2) From the broader text it seems that Mary the mother of Jesus, Jesus, Jesus’ brothers (Jn.2.12; Mt.13.55-56), and His disciples were all invited to the wedding. According to a third-century Latin preface to the Gospel of John, the bridegroom was John, the son of Zebedee. According to another tradition, John’s mother was the sister of Jesus’ mother, making John and Jesus cousins, which would explain why Mary, Jesus, and Jesus’ brothers were invited to the wedding. But there is no trace of these facts in the text or elsewhere in biblical records.

But the text does provide some helpful hints as to why Mary, Jesus, and His brothers were invited to the wedding. Mary’s knowledge and concern for the wine running out makes one think that she was involved in the planning of the food and drinks for the wedding banquet. Anyone who has planned for a wedding knows all the planning that goes into the rehearsal dinner and the reception. You know how stressful this planning can be. You don’t want to leave anyone out. You want to make sure there is plenty of food and drinks. You want everyone to have a good and enjoyable time.

But for us today planning a wedding is easy as compare to New Testament times. Today we just book the venue, tell the restaurant the number of guest, prepare a seating chart, and the evening’s agenda. But in the time of the New Testament the wedding ceremonies would last up to seven days and the host was responsible to provide food and drinks for the entire time. To run out of food or wine would bring great embarrassment to the host family and the Bride and Groom. For Mary to have knowledge that the wine had run out would mean that she was not just a common guest. It shows that she was intimately involved with the preparations and possibility the Chairperson of the Host Committee.

Now that the wine had run out she couldn’t have someone slip out to Total Wine. Mary needed a miracle. Her initiative shows that she felt responsible for fixing this embarrassing problem. Her giving orders to the servants’ shows that Mary was not some “plus one” on the guest registry. My point is that the text provides adequate information for us to conclude that Mary and her family were more than just common guests. They were family either by relation or relationship and for this reason Mary, Jesus, and Jesus’ brothers were invited to the wedding.

**Why Were Jesus’ Disciples Invited?**

But why were Jesus’ disciples invited? There is no indication from the text that Jesus’ disciples had any relation to the Bride and Groom or their family. To answer this question we must begin by considering the events prior to receiving their invitation. Remember, every text must be interpreted in context.

In the presiding chapter, chapter one of John, we first have the divine prologue where we are introduce to the Word becoming flesh and dwelling among us. (Jn.1.14) After this divine prologue we have the proclamation of John the Baptist, the last Prophet, that Jesus is Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. John the Baptist inaugurates Jesus’ public ministry by baptizing Jesus in the Jordan River.

*John testified saying, “He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, ‘He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.’ I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God.”* (Jn.1.32-34)

The first half of chapter one John presents clearly the Jesus is the incarnate Son of God, the Messiah, and the One who takes away the sins of the world.

**The Calling of His First Disciples**

Next John records Jesus calling His first two disciples, Andrew and Peter, to follow Him. (Jn.1.35-42) The calling the twelve disciples, also called apostles, is essential for the laying the foundation of the Church. (Eph.2.20-22) The disciples were called by Christ to leave their houses, lands, and occupations to follow Jesus. Upon the shoulders of His disciples Jesus would build His Church. The original twelve disciples were special and unique but they also serve as a representation to all believers of what is means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. The day after calling Andrew and Peter, Jesus purposed to leave the region of the Jordan River and to journey to Galilee about a two-day walk. Along the way Jesus called Philip to follow Him. Philip went and brought Nathanael to Jesus. (Jn.1.43-46) The interaction between Jesus and Nathanael is key to understanding why the disciples were invited to the wedding.

*Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and said of him, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!” Nathanael said to Him, “How do You know me?” Jesus answered and said to him, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.”**Nathanael answered Him, “Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel.”**Jesus answered and said to him, “Because I said to you that I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You will see greater things than these.”* (Jn.1.47-50)

The last verse of chapter one becomes the hinge for the understanding why the disciples were invited to the wedding at Cana of Galilee. Jesus told Nathanael, “*You will see greater things than these.”*

**On the Third Day**

Then story of the wedding of Cana begins in chapter two saying, “*On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee.”* (Jn.2.1a)Most scholar agree that the reference to *“On the third day”* is to establish a direct connection with what took place two days earlier when Jesus told Nathanael, *“You will see greater things than these.”*

The miracle at Cana was the “beginning of the signs” of Christ. Even though Christ was apprehensive about the use of signs He knew that God would use signs to bring people to saving faith. Even in our text verse eleven explains, “*This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him.”* (Jn.2.11) So, we can conclude that one reason why Jesus’ disciples were invited to the wedding at Cana was for Jesus to manifest His glory as the Son of God and begin His signs and miracles so that people, especially His disciples, would believe in Him.

But the host family would not have known anything about this miracle when they invited His disciples to the wedding. Jesus manifesting His glory so that His disciples would believe in Him really doesn’t answer the question why Jesus’ disciples were invited to the wedding of Cana. The fact is that Jesus’ disciples were not family. The disciples probably didn’t know the Bride or Groom and the Bride and Groom probably didn’t know the disciples. The fact is that Jesus’s disciples were strangers at the banquet. And for strangers to be invited to a weeklong celebration that included a full course of food and drinks was highly unusual.

One might conclude that Jesus’ disciples were nothing more than New Testament wedding crashers. But I don’t think so. I think Jesus’ disciples were invited to the wedding because Jesus insisted that they attend because they were part of Jesus’ new family, the people of His own possession, the first microcosm of the people of faith that follow Christ. I believe that Jesus’ disciples were invited to the wedding because in Christ strangers are invited to the banquet.

**Strangers are Invited to the Banquet**

Let me explain. Notice that the city is identified as *Cana of Galilee* two times in the story. Not just Cana but *Cana of Galilee*. Why is the significant? Because the Prophet Isaiah had prophesied in the eighth century before Christ, that the Messiah would bring the light of the Gospel to the people of Galilee. Isaiah tells us,

*But there will be no more gloom for her who was in anguish; in earlier times He treated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali with contempt, but later on He shall make it glorious, by the way of the sea, on the other side of Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles.* (Is.9.1) The city of Cana is located in the region described here in Isaiah.

The prophecy continues, *The people who walk in darkness will see a great light; Those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them. You shall multiply the nation, You shall increase their gladness; They will be glad in Your presence as with the gladness of harvest, as men rejoice when they divide the spoil.* (Is.9.2-3) Sounds like a celebration banquet to me!

What’s the reason for the banquet describe by Isaiah in the Galilee of the Gentiles? *For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this.* (Is.9.6-7)

The first miracle at Cana of Galilee was to underscore that Jesus came to establish a new community of God’s people and Jesus meant to unveil this new community at the wedding of Cana. This new gospel community will not be restricted to the nation of Israel but it will be a community of strangers from every tribe, people, nation, and language.

Jesus made sure His disciples were invited to the wedding to underscore the fact that in His new community strangers are invited to the banquet. Every disciple of Christ must remember there was a time when we were strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who were formerly far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. (Eph.2.12-13) In Christ strangers are welcomed to the banquet! We will talk more about this in a couple of weeks but for now it is important for you to know that in Christ *you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household.* (Eph.2.19) No matter your background, your disability, or your situation Christ by His Holy Spirit goes out into the highways and along the hedges, and compels everyone to come in, so that banquet would be full. (Lk.14.23)

It is interesting to note that the name “Cana” has from ancient times been translated as “ownership” or “possession.” I believe Jesus made sure that His disciples were invited to the wedding at Cana not only to underscore that strangers are welcomed to the banquet but also to emphasize that when Christ calls us to be His disciples we become one with Christ.

**We are One with Christ**

We become His! When Christ calls us as His disciples we become one with Christ. The two become one flesh. The Apostle Paul calls this spiritual oneness between Christ and His church, between Christ and His disciples, a great mystery. (Eph.5.31-32) We are members of His body. (Eph.5.30) He has chosen us for His own possession. (IPt.2.9) If Christ has called you to be His disciple you belong to Christ. (ICor.3.23a) Christ is in you and you are in Christ! *There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.* (Gal.3.28) In Christ there is one flock with one shepherd. (Jn.10.16) Jesus’ disciples were welcomed to the banquet not because they were members of the wedding family but because they were members of Christ’s family. And so are you if Christ has called you to be His disciple!

**Closing Thought**

Is Christ calling you to come and follow Him today? Is He calling you to lay down your life and come and follow Him? If so, surrender your life to Christ today and receive Him as your Messiah, the One who takes away sin. Maybe you need a miracle today. If so, be like Mary and go to Jesus and ask for His assistance in your life. Maybe you feel like a stranger or an outcast today. If so, the Good News is that in Christ strangers are welcomed to the banquet and invited to share in all the goodness of God’s grace.

**Call to Prayer**

*You are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household.* (Eph.2.19)