**The Lord of the Banquet Series**

**“The Better Wine”**

**John 2.1-12**

**Introduction**

This morning we come to the last sermon in the series “The Lord of the Banquet” as we investigate why Jesus chose turning water into wine at the wedding at Cana of Galilee to be His first miracle.

Let’s begin this morning by reading the text recorded in John 2.1-12.

*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.*

**The Invitation**

In the first sermon of this series we first looked at those invited to the wedding and concluded that Mary, Jesus, and Jesus’ brothers were invited to the wedding because they were close family friends or relatives. But Jesus’ disciples were not family. The fact is Jesus’ disciples had been invited only a couple of days before the wedding. Jesus’ disciples were strangers at the wedding feast. So, why were strangers invited to a weeklong wedding celebration that included a full course of food and drinks? Because Jesus wanted to underscore the truth that in God’s Kingdom strangers are welcomed to the banquet. This is good news for all those who remember that 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 formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.* (Eph.2.12-13) Because of the grace of God through Christ strangers are invited to the banquet because through Christ we are members of God’s family. (Eph.2.19)

**The Wedding**

In the second sermon we considered the redemptive significance of the wedding ceremony and concluded that Christ has chosen us to be His Bride. We are betrothed to Christ. God the Father set the price of the dowry to be the sacrifice of Christ on the cross and Christ paid the dowry for His bride with His blood. After paying the dowry Christ returned to His Father in heaven. Today, the Church is in the interval stage of the wedding ceremony, when the bride is making herself ready for the Bridegrooms return by implementing God’s holy provisions such as prayer, the sacraments, fellowship, and most importantly the Word of God. Believers use these holy provisions as we eagerly await the coming of our heavenly Bridegroom, the Lord Jesus Christ, to return and leads us in a heavenly procession to the wedding banquet – the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

**The Banquet**

In the third sermon we looked closely at the wedding banquet, what the Bible calls the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. We concluded that in our modern day wedding ceremonies “it’s all about the bride.” All the attention is given to the bride but at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb it’s all about the groom, our Lord Jesus Christ. *He brought me into His banquet hall, and His banner over me is love.* (Song of Songs 2.4) He has granted that we may eat and drink at His table in His Kingdom. (Lk.22.30) As Jesus received sinners and ate with them in His earthly ministry so He will in His heavenly Kingdom. (Lk.15.2) The difference is that at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb He will clothed us in fine linen, made white in the blood of Christ. (Rev.7.9, 14) Jesus told us that He would never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when He drinks it new in the Kingdom of God. (Mk.14.25) Well, on that day at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb the Lord Jesus will drink of the cup because all things have been accomplished and His bride has been fully redeemed!

**The Better Wine**

That leads us to today as we consider “The Better Wine.” I believe Jesus chose the turning the water into wine to launch His earthly ministry because the better wine exemplifies the *more excellent ministry* that Christ came to establish. Christ’s accomplishments would usher in*a better covenant, with better promises*.” (Heb.8.6)

The ministry of Christ would be better than Moses. (Heb.3.1-4.13) Christ would be a better High Priest who can sympathize with our weakness. (Heb.4.14-7.28) Christ would be the mediator of the better covenant that is an eternal one. (Heb.8.1-9.28) Christ would provide the better sacrifice for our sin once for all. (Heb.10.1-39) Christ came to do the will of the Father and by doing so He took away the first in order to establish the second. (Heb.10.9) Christ is the better wine! You see the Law was only a shadow of the good things to come through Christ. (Heb.10.1) The Law was just a symbol related to food, drink, various washings, and regulations. But when Christ appeared He ushered in the good things to come. (Heb.9.9-11)

This miracle of turning water into wine was meant to manifest the glory of Christ, the Son of God, who came to fulfill all of God’s commands so that those that believe in Him could drink of the better wine of God’s redemption. This was the purpose for His coming and Jesus desired to illustrate His purpose through His first miracle. Many miracles would occur during Jesus’ earthly ministry but this first one best illustrates the result of His overall purpose for coming – to accomplish all of the Father’s holy will so that believers could drink of the better wine of the New Covenant through the transforming work of Christ in our hearts.

**The Narrative**

Let’s walk through the narrative of the text to discover the divine drama of this first miracle. After establishing the fact that there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee that Jesus, Jesus’ mother, His brothers, and His disciples all attended the narrative discloses that the wine ran out. (2.1-3a) Remember that the host family was responsible to provide food and drink for their guest for at least seven days. To run out of food or wine would bring great embarrassment to the host family and the Bride and Groom. Jesus’ mother, Mary, became aware of this embarrassing problem. By her giving orders to the servants later on in the narrative leads us to concluded that in some way Mary was involved in the hosting of the wedding feast. After being informed Mary immediately went to Jesus for help. This begins a divine dialog between Jesus and His mother.

**Divine Dialog**

*“They have no wine.”*

The first words spoken are Jesus’ mother saying, *“They have no wine.”* (Jn.2.3) Mary felt responsible for fixing this embarrassing problem and she needed a miracle. And what is the problem? They have no wine. They are empty. Their supplies have run out. They had exhausted their recourses. They have no ability to fix the problem. They are destitute. They are in need of a miracle.

Spiritually speaking isn’t that exactly the conclusions a person must come to in order to receive God’s gracious redemption through Christ? We must come to the point where we need a miracle. We must come to the point where we confess that we are spiritually empty. We must come to the point where we admit that we have exhausted our recourses and have no ability to fix the problem. We must come to the point where we acknowledge that we are spiritually destitute and need of a miracle.

Notice that Jesus’ mother projects the problem onto to Jesus saying, *“They have no wine.”* It seems that Mary has unlimited confidence that Jesus can fix the problem. She doesn’t go into the details about what caused the problem. She simply states that fact that there is no wine and has great expectation that Jesus can fix the problem. Jesus responds to Mary’s passive aggressive appeal saying, *“Woman, what does that have to do with us? My hour has not yet come.”* (2.4)

Jesus’ response could be perceived as being rude, inconsiderate, and somewhat selfish unless you conclude that Jesus is “baiting” Mary into a divine dialog to set the stage for the miracle. Jesus used this “baiting” technique a few times in His ministry. One incident occurred when a Canaanite woman whose daughter was severely oppressed by a demon begged Jesus to heal her daughter. (Mt.15.21-28)

The Canaanite mother came and knelt before Jesus saying, *“Lord, help me.”**And He answered, “It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.”*Now that’s kind of rude! Wouldn’t you agree? Jesus is comparing this Canaanite woman and her daughter to dogs. But listen to how the woman responds, *“Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table.” Then Jesus answered her, “O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire.” And her daughter was healed instantly.* The Lord was “baiting” the Canaanite mother into a divine dialog to set the stage for a miracle. And that’s what is happening here with Mary.

**Divine Dialog**

*“Woman, what does that have to do with us?”*

I believe that Jesus asking Mary, “*What does that have to do with us,”* is His way to solidifying that fact that Mary is looking to Him alone to fix the problem. “*What does that have to do with us?”* I believe in Mary’s mind she knew that it had everything to do with her and Jesus! Mary knew she was empty. That she had no solution to fix the problem outside of Christ. She knew that they had exhausted all other recourses and had no ability to fix the problem. She was destitute. Basically, Mary knew that Jesus was the only One who can fix the problem. By coming to Jesus Mary is saying, “I’m looking to You alone to fix my problem. That is what it has to do with us. I need You!

As the hymn writer wrote, “I need Thee, oh, I need Thee; Every hour I need Thee;
Oh, bless me now, my Savior! I come to Thee.” The Lord wants to bring us to the point where we come to Him and confess our absolute need for Him to fix our problem. Will you come to Jesus this morning confessing your absolute need for Him to fix your problem?

**Divine Conversation**

*“My hour has not yet come”*

To assure that Mary’s faith was in Jesus alone to solve her problem Jesus adds, *“My hour has not yet come.”* Jesus knew that performing this miracle would launch His earthly ministry. But it seems to me that Jesus was not being apprehensive about performing the miracle but rather He desired to see how Mary would respond to His comments.

**Divine Conversation**

*“Whatever He says to you, do it.”*

And Mary’s immediate response was to tell the servants*, “Whatever He says to you, do it.”* (2.4,5) Mary responded with unwavering faith in Christ to solve the problem. This is key to receiving the better wine found in Christ. We must have unwavering faith in Christ! As Jesus would later teach His disciples, *“Have faith in God. Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be granted him. Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be granted you.* (Mk.11.23-24) Ask the Lord to give you unwavering faith in His Word today. Say to the Lord, “Whatever you say to do – I will 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.* (2.6-7)

**“Vessels of the Law”**

The six stone water pots holding twenty or thirty gallons each now dominates the scene. These water pots were used to obey the Jewish rules of purification, for example, the washing of the hands before and after every meal and the washing cups, bowls, and pots. (Mk.7.1-5) The Pharisees taught that to eat with unwashed hands and utensils would defile a person. The idea was that the outside observance of the Law is what mattered to God. Jesus using these vessels of law to contain the better wine gives a clear indication of the meaning of the miracle. There was an abundance of water for the outward observance of law keeping but there was no wine for the joyous celebration.

These six water pots, these vessels of the law, bring us face to face with the miracle itself. The people believed that the outward observance of the law would wash away the impurities of this world and make them clean in the sight of God. But no matter the amount of law keeping will make us righteous before God. The Bible says it like this, “*For what the Law could not do . . . God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin . . . so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us . . ..”* (Rom.8.3-4)

And Jesus came that we would have an abundance of grace so He ordered the water pots be filled. So they filled them to the brim. Remember, Jesus came that we would have life, and have it abundantly. (Jn.10.10) *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.”*

**The Abundance of Wine**

The abundance of the better wine is often overlooked. The guests now had over 150 gallons of wine to enjoy. And not some cheap Boone’s Farm wine but the finest wine you would ever drink. What would have caused the guests to go home disappointed and the host family to suffer extreme embarrassment has now become the source for joyous celebration.

The motif of abundance of wine often occurs in Old Testament prophecy as a characteristic of the glory of the coming of the Kingdom of God. *The Lord of hosts will prepare a lavish banquet for all peoples on this mountain; A banquet of aged wine, choice pieces with marrow, And refined, aged wine.* (Is.25.6)*“Behold, days are coming,” declares the Lord, . . . When the mountains will drip sweet wine . . . They will also plant vineyards and drink their wine,* (Am.9.13-14) *“And in that day the mountains shall drip sweet wine, . . . and a fountain shall come forth from the house of the Lord.* (Joel 3.18) *They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion, and they shall be radiant over the goodness of the Lord, over the grain, the wine, and the oil, and over the young of the flock and the herd; their life shall be like a watered garden, and they shall languish no more. Then shall the young women rejoice in the dance, and the young men and the old shall be merry. I will turn their mourning into joy; I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow. I will feast the soul of the priests with abundance, and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, declares the Lord.”* (Jer.31.12-14)

I believe that Jesus chose the turning of water into wine as His first miracle because it best exemplifies that He came to usher in the Kingdom of God, to give us an abundance of God’s grace, and to transform our mourning into rejoicing.

**Conclusion**

Jesus knew that once the guests would taste this better wine that no one would say, “The old was good enough.” (Lk.3.39) And that’s the way it is with coming to Christ. Once you taste the goodness of God’s grace through Christ you would never say, “My old life was good enough.” As the Psalmist declared, “*Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him.”* (Ps.34.8) Come to Christ with faith believing that only He can solve your problem. Let go of your attempts to please God by outward obedience and trust Christ to cleanse you from the inside out. Come to Christ knowing that He will provide for you an abundance of grace so that you will be able to celebrate His goodness for all eternity.

**Call to Prayer**

*“If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink.”* (Jn.7.37b)