JESUS CHANGED THE WATER INTO WINE

John 2:1-22
Key Verse: 2:11

“This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.”

Last week, we studied how Jesus called his first disciples by inviting them to come and see how he lived. Andrew, Simon Peter, Nathanael and John all took the chance to spend time with Jesus. They discovered that Jesus saw each of them with the eyes of God. They learned that Jesus was prepared to help them one by one to grow as great men and servants of God. Most of all, they came to believe that Jesus was the Son of God, and the Christ who is the Savior of the World. According to Jesus, however, they would see many more wonderful things when they followed Jesus to the end. In this passage, Jesus reveals his glory to his disciples through the miracle of turning water into wine. Next, Jesus drives out the businessmen from the temple courts in Jerusalem. It has been said that these two events best reveal Jesus’ grace and truth. They also reveal the glory and cross of being his disciple. May God bless us to put our faith in Jesus and in his word through today’s passage!

I. Jesus’ First Miraculous Sign (1-11)

Look at verses 1-2. “On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus’ mother was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding.” Jesus had just returned to Galilee from Judea, where he had called his first disciples. Now, he and his disciples, who were also from Galilee, were invited to a wedding in Cana, the hometown of Nathanael. Jesus’ mother was there, busy helping with the preparations. A wedding is a joyful occasion, because marriage is God’s best blessing for mankind while we live in this world cursed by sin. It is God’s utmost prayer that through marriage, each man and woman might have someone to pray for and encourage them, so that together, they might fulfill their holy mission as one. A wedding
is a hopeful occasion for all young men and women of this world. Now, two young people from Cana were getting married. People came from miles around to bless this wedding, and to pray for their marriage in God. Close relatives and friends prepared songs and dances. Jesus and his disciples came as well. Surely, it was a blessed wedding most of all, because Jesus, the Son of God, was there.

However, something had gone wrong in the planning of the wedding. One of the servants grabbed the last amphora of wine and began to pour it, when he realized that there was not enough wine to serve the rest of the guests. A wedding without wine was like a party without music. How could the guests celebrate the occasion or bless the wedding when there was nothing to drink, and no wine to boost their spirits? A commotion began to arise among the serving servants at the wedding, until the news reached Mary, the mother of Jesus. Mary was not a close relative of the families. But Mary saw that no one among the others serving the wedding had any idea how to solve this problem. Mary did. Look at verse 3. “When the wine was gone, Jesus’ mother said to him, ‘They have no more wine.’” Mary brought the no-wine problem to Jesus. Obviously, Mary knew of Jesus’ power to perform miraculous signs. However, Mary did not say, “Please fix the no-wine problem for this wedding.” Mary simply brought it to his attention. It was her act of faith that Jesus had come to the wedding to bless the wedding. Mary came to Jesus as though in prayer to let him know what their need was, with faith that he would bless the wedding in the best way. We must learn the faith of Mary, and bring to Jesus our needs and the needs of others, so that he might pour out his blessings according to his will.

Look at verse 4. “‘Dear woman, why do you involve me?’ Jesus replied. ‘My time has not yet come.’” Jesus’ answer to Mary seems less than enthusiastic. Jesus called his mother, “woman.” But this was in fact Jesus’ tender call to his mom. When he wanted to comfort his mother while she shed tears for him on the cross, he asked her to take John the apostle in his place, saying, “Dear woman, here is your son.” Jesus wanted to embrace his mother. But he couldn’t, because of his holy mission to die on the cross for the sin of the world. So Jesus comforted her and called her, “Dear woman.” Nonetheless, Jesus does
not seem ready to do what his mother is asking of him. Jesus said, “My time has not yet come.” Jesus’ time was different than ordinary peoples’ time. Ordinary people live in this world as if they would live forever, with only a vague sense of their impending departure and judgment. They do many foolish things, thinking that they can always make up for them later. They also fail to do many important things, thinking that they can take care of that, tomorrow. Jesus, however, was acutely aware of the mission he had to fulfill while on earth. It meant that his time was not his own, for what he did and how he did it belonged to God. He was not free to use his power randomly, for the sake of a mother’s wish or a friend’s favor. Jesus was a man of mission. A man of mission’s time belongs to God. Therefore he does not engage in meaningless activities. Our time is precious and holy, because God gives it to us for the sake of carrying out our holy mission.

Look at verse 5. “His mother said to the servants, ‘Do whatever he tells you.’” Through this command to the servants, Jesus’ mother reveals her deep faith in Jesus as the Son of God. Jesus’ mother did not take Jesus’ words as a rejection of her as his mother, or of her request. She accepted them for what they were, a statement of God’s sovereignty over Jesus’ time and work. She acknowledged that Jesus was living under God’s sovereign rule. Still, Mary believed that Jesus had come to the wedding to bless the wedding. In other words, Mary believed that God is good. When the angel Gabriel came to Mary to announce to her that she would give birth to the Son of God, she was initially greatly troubled and disturbed. But when she learned that she would become pregnant through the work of the Holy Spirit, she confessed, “I am the Lord’s servant. May it be to me as you have said.” (Lk 1:38). This is the faith that enabled Mary to become the mother of the Son of God. At this time, Mary humbled herself and decided to wait on Jesus because of her faith that God is good. Because of her faith, the servants were ready to do anything to help Jesus. Faith that God is good is influential faith. Faith that God is good opens the door for God’s work to be done in and around us.

The servants were ready to do whatever Jesus told them. But what could they do? They had no way to solve the no-wine problem. The
only thing they had available was six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing. These jars were big, holding from 20 to 30 gallons each, but they were very empty. Look at verse 7. "Jesus said to the servants, ‘Fill the jars with water'; so they filled them to the brim." It looked as though Jesus were capitulating to the situation. There was no more wine, so the guests would have to make do with water. The servants would have to work very hard to fill those jars with up to 180 gallons of water. But they were not fatalistic regarding Jesus’ command. They filled the jars to the brim. They did their best, though it was obviously a lost cause. Then Jesus gave the surprising command: “Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet.” (8). Jesus commanded the servants to draw out the well water from the jars reserved for hand and foot washing, and present it to the master of the banquet for approval. Was Jesus kidding? Surely, the master of the banquet would be offended by the request to “taste” the water, and would blame the servants for mocking him. The servants did not calculate or compromise however. They did as Jesus asked, and brought the water they had drawn out to the master of the banquet by faith. The master of the banquet tasted the water, but it had been turned into wine. He sipped the wine and smiled. The servants nearly fainted. All they had done was obey Jesus. But their obedience produced such a fantastic result. Faith that obeys Jesus is miracle-working faith. Many young people feel that their Christian faith is powerless. They don’t need to listen to more exciting Christian music. They need to practice obedience to Jesus’ commands.

The master of the banquet called the bridegroom aside and told him, “Everyone serves the choice wine first, and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink. But you have saved the best till now.” The master of the banquet was ecstatic after drinking the wine that the servants had given him. It seemed to him that he had never had such good wine. And he was astonished that such wine would be served so late into the wedding party. He felt blessed, and told the bridegroom how pleased he was. Jesus had completely changed the wedding’s mood by changing the wash water into sweet, refreshing and invigorating wine. In some ways, Jesus didn’t do much. It was Mary’s attentiveness and the servants’ diligence that had made the miracle possible. But without Jesus, all of their efforts would have
been in vain. For only Jesus has the power to change the nature of things, at the root. In this way, Jesus revealed his glory as the Son of God. Jesus came into this world, just as he came and attended the wedding. It was not by accident. It was to bless the world. It was to solve the problem of the world – the problem of sin. It was not his problem – it is our problem. But through the prayers and petitions of his people, and most of all because of the goodness and faithfulness of our God, he made that problem his own and took upon himself the sin of the world as the Lamb of God. He changes each person who believes in him from someone ordinary and powerless into a source of blessing and joy for the world. Praise and glory to the Lord Jesus Christ!

Look at verse 11. “This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory and his disciples put their faith in him.” Jesus’ disciples didn’t do anything at the wedding. They just watched Mary, then the servants, help Jesus serve the wedding. But they were not mere spectators. As they saw what Jesus did and what he said, their spiritual eyes were opened to understand who Jesus is. So they put their faith in him. The author describes this as an action on the part of the disciples. They were not passive in the face of Jesus’ miraculous power and authority as the Son of God. They made a decision of faith to put their faith in him, and follow him as their Master and Savior. According to the chemistry of John’s gospel, faith in Jesus is not merely believing that he is the Christ, nor is it merely following him along with the crowd. We must put our faith in Jesus by entrusting our lives and our hearts to him. We must make a commitment to him as our Lord. This is not a light matter. It is because there is not only grace for those who follow Jesus. There is also truth.

II. Jesus Cleanses the Temple (12-22)

Jesus and his disciples went to Capernaum for several days. Then, John indicates there is a gap in time, as the Jewish Passover has drawn near, and Jesus has gone up to Jerusalem. John’s gospel presents this as a Passover that occurred earlier than the one during which Jesus was arrested and tried, while the other gospels indicate
that this event took place during Jesus’ last week on earth. There may have been two separate events, or the author John may have chosen this event as the perfect counterpoint to the story of the wedding at Cana, regardless of the separation in time between them. Regardless, Jesus went into the temple courts during the preparations for the Passover feast. The temple courts were the place where women and foreigners could come and worship God. It was also a place where men could speak to one another about their religious and political life. It was in fact the heart of Jerusalem and the heart of the Jewish people. What did he find there? Look at verse 14. Jesus found men selling sheep, cattle and doves. Others had set up tables and were exchanging money for a fee. The temple courts were being overrun by animals and merchants. It was ostensibly a service for the Jews of the diaspora who were returning to worship God at the temple. What did Jesus think about it? Look at verses 15 and 16. Jesus made a whip out of cords and drove out all the animals. He also scattered the coins of the moneychangers and overturned their tables. He told those selling doves, “Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father’s house into a market?”

When Jesus came to Jerusalem and the temple for worshiping God, Jesus found there was a problem. God's people did not honor God's house or God’s name. They were in fact using God’s house as a way to make money. Essentially, the religious leaders of Jesus’ time had claimed ownership of God’s house for themselves, to use as they saw fit. They had blocked the way for those who wanted to come to God. Jesus had come to declare to these corrupted religious leaders that God would reclaim the temple as his house, and restore its original purpose as the place for sinners to come to him for forgiveness and life. So Jesus in holy anger drove out all of the merchants, and cleared a way for all others to come in.

Jesus’ disciples were in shock to see Jesus acting so aggressively. But they had put their faith in him. So they did not let themselves think about Jesus humanly. They recalled Scripture, and saw his actions as the fulfillment of God’s promise concerning the Messiah. The Jews, on the other hand, saw Jesus’ action as a political act of rebellion. They challenged Jesus to prove his authority to do all this. Jesus said in
verse 19, “Destroy this temple and I will raise it in three days.” The Jews challenged him, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?” The temple had been rebuilt under Herod the Great and his successors. It was a monumental effort. Perhaps the Jews felt that they had built the temple? But they had not. It was established and blessed by God. It is God who builds the temple, and God who blesses it and accepts men's worship. The Jews were in rebellion against God’s Sovereignty and Ownership of the temple and their nation. They would lose for themselves and their nation the privilege to serve God’s physical temple. But God had in mind a better temple that would be for all men.

Look at verses 21 and 22. “But the temple he had spoken of was his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.” Through Jesus' death on the cross for men's sin and his resurrection from the dead, Jesus became the temple of God for all men. Whoever comes to him and puts their faith in him can experience God’s grace of forgiveness of sins, and his call to holy mission. The Jews had rejected God's mission as a kingdom of priests and a holy mission. But it was in fact God's will, so that God's world salvation purpose might become known to all men through faith in Christ Jesus and in his words. The disciples were the witnesses of what Jesus would do.

May God bless us to know that Jesus has come to bless us and to fulfill his promise in our lives. May God bless us to put our faith in Jesus, and participate with him in the work of bringing his world salvation hope to all mankind when we believe and obey his words of command.