

“THE OLD BECOMES NEW”

John 2:1-11

Pastor Keith E. Gephart

[Two-Part Message]

INTRODUCTION

Jesus now begins to make the transition from private life to public life. He has been announced, baptized, and introduced by John the Baptist; he has endured 40 days of temptation in the wilderness; he has acquired six of His twelve disciples.

What would be the best way to enter the public scene? Where should He choose to manifest Himself. Surely He must consider what circumstances would give Him the best political advantage, and how He could attract the most interest and the greatest following.

Surely He would choose the religious and political center of Israel—Jerusalem. What better place than the temple? It would be best to pick the time of a large religious festival when thousands of pilgrims would be in Jerusalem; Passover season was at hand. That would be a good time. Surely He would consult His advisors as to the best strategy for His “unveiling.”

He must be careful not to make statements that would “turn off” potential followers and supporters. Everyone knows that money and support are crucial in order to have success. He must be concerned to promote those issues that are in accord with “political correctness.”

Tell me something. *Does all of this sound appropriate to our Savior’s life? Does all of this fit with the revealed truth of our text?*

Instead of the above scenario, we find Jesus doing just the opposite. A **less auspicious occasion** and a **less spectacular miracle** can hardly be imagined! Jesus attends the wedding of a poor family from Galilee who live in a humble village—so small that we aren’t even sure of its precise location today. Jesus did not appeal to the crowds even here—He did His miracle quietly so that most of the people were not even aware of what had happened. He did not appeal to any religious or political leaders—He was helping a poor, humble newly-wed couple who were in desperate straits due to the lack of wine—an essential element of a Jewish wedding ceremony.

We learn something very significant about our Savior here. He has compassion for those humble followers who are in need—in this way He manifests the glory of His Father Who has the same character. Moreover, He is concerned about social occasions such as weddings, funerals, etc. He did not come into the world in order to isolate Himself from poor, lost sinners. He came to “seek and to save that which is lost.”

By attending this wedding as the **first** official action of His public ministry, Jesus once and for all put His stamp of approval upon marriage, so that indeed today we can call it “**Holy Matrimony.**” Surely Jesus approves marriage between one man and one woman for life—that is until death do they part.

SHOULD WE BE SOCIAL DRINKERS?

What about the issue of wine-making here? Many of you will not likely get much out of this message if you are wondering what impact this miracle of Jesus has upon the issue of temperance. **DOES JESUS HERE PUT HIS STAMP OF APPROVAL UPON AT LEAST “SOCIAL DRINKING?”**

1) *NO OVERINDULGENCE*

No sensible Bible interpreter would argue for an excuse to overindulge in the use of wine. The Scriptures are consistent in condemning excess and drunkenness (e.g. I Cor. 5:11; 6:10; Gal. 5:21; Rom. 13:13; Eph. 5:18; I Pet. 4:3; I Thes. 5:11; Pr. 20:1; 23:31-32).

Some Bible critics do mock this scene by pointing out the “excessive amount” of wine made by Jesus here. “Two to three firkins” would be 18-27 gallons in each water pot. There were six water pots (v. 6), thus a total of 108-162 gallons of wine!

Surely the wedding guests could not drink all of this wine, especially if as we assume the wedding feast was already largely over. (A typical feast lasted for seven days.) Why would Jesus make so much?

Be assured of one thing—none of the wine would be wasted, any more than the twelve baskets leftover from the feeding of the 5,000 would be wasted.

- 1) Here Jesus manifests the **magnificence of His kindness and generosity to those in need**. He is the One who can do “exceedingly above all that we could ask or think.
- 2) Jesus was giving a very generous wedding gift to this poor, young couple—who would be able to take all of this leftover wine and sell it at the market price and save for a good start in their marriage.
- 3) There is **no indication** that anyone at this wedding feast had drunk to excess, despite the comments of the “ruler” of the feast in verse 10. He was simply stating what was typically true at the various worldly feasts of which he had knowledge. The persons attending this wedding seemed to be close friends/family members of Mary (v. 1) and Jesus. They would be people of high character.

2) *NO GRAPE JUICE*

It would be easier for me to take the position I do if I were to argue that this “wine” were merely **grape juice**. However, I would be intellectually dishonest.

Let me explain wine-making in the culture of that day. [We still have much evidence of the wine vats where the wine was made by “stomping on the grapes with bare feet, allowing the juice to flow from the press through a channel into another vat for storage and fermentation. Without refrigeration, with the juice being exposed to the open air—fermentation was a given, and dirt and bugs could not be kept out of the mixture!

Of course, every effort to strain out the dirt and bugs would be made. The fermentation process would help preserve the beverage indefinitely for later consumption. Israel did not have a good water supply. Their rainy season was much like ours, and water had to be stored during the rainy season in cisterns. After some time, that water by itself would not be fit for human consumption. But, if mixed with wine, it could be drunk.

We know for a fact that Jewish “table wine” was typically mixed at the ratio of **three to four parts water to one part wine**. *It was considered inappropriate to drink undiluted wine.* Drunkenness was socially taboo—especially with “god-fearing” families like those at this wedding. Of course, that would not be the case with the heathen, the Greeks, and the Romans.

NO ENCOURAGEMENT TO SOCIAL DRINKING

1. Table Wine was a necessity in that culture.—**It is most definitely not a necessity in this culture!**
2. Table wine was highly diluted—especially when eating, it would be difficult if not impossible to get drunk. Food when mixed with wine would further dilute the alcohol.
3. Distillation was not yet invented—not until about the fifteenth to sixteenth century A.D. Undiluted wine would have a maximum alcohol content of only about 7%. Table wine would likely have less than 2%. Today, “spirits” sold in our grocery and liquor stores often have an alcohol potency of 25% or more. Even many wines are “fortified” so that they contain 14% alcohol or more.
4. Drunkenness in Jewish culture was **rare and unacceptable**. In our culture, **IT IS EPIDEMIC AND ACCEPTABLE** as long as it is not *chronic* and as long as *one does not drive*, nor cause any *adverse problem to someone else*.
5. Alcohol consumption is closely connected with many moral and social problems: **Violence and violent crime, spousal and child abuse, divorce and family breakups, family poverty and welfare, unemployment, poor job performance, suicide, automobile injuries and fatalities, gambling, immoral sexual behavior, promiscuous sexuality of all kinds, including homosexuality, and risky behavior in general.**

NOW, AS A CHRISTIAN AND A CHILD OF GOD, PLEASE TELL ME: ARE THESE THE KINDS OF BEHAVIORAL PATTERNS AND PROBLEMS WITH WHICH YOU WANT TO IDENTIFY YOURSELF?

6. The Bible forbids us to become a “stumbling block” to others. See such passages as I Cor. 8:9; 9:12; 10:23-24, 32, 33; Rom. 14:13-15.
7. I have never yet pastored a church wherein we did not have at least one member who came out of a background of alcohol or other substance abuse. Should I by my example condone even the moderate use of a substance that by even one drink my brother would stumble back into his sinful lifestyle? **Even worse, should I serve this brother wine in the Lord’s Supper?** Should that which is “holy” become a source of sin for him?
8. We now know that some people are “*genetically predisposed*” to becoming alcoholics. That does not mean that they must do so or that they have no hope. The same is true for some other sins—like homosexuality, or even sexual promiscuity. **Should I take a chance with my own life, or with the life of another, by taking or encouraging someone to take, that FIRST DRINK?** [End—Part one]

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(part 2)

I. THE PROBLEM AT THE WEDDING FEAST (1-3)

A. Time—third day after v. 43

B. Place—Cana of Galilee

C. Mary’s presence there—must be close to the family

D. Invitation of Both Jesus and His Disciples (6 of them to this point).

1. Could have received the invitation once arriving at Nazareth.

2. Could have been invited by Nathaniel—who was from Cana (Jn. 21:2)

E. Mary tells Jesus the problem with the wine.

This was a **serious** problem for the groom and his family.

a. A social disgrace

b. A possible source of legal action against the family

II. THE PROBLEM WITH JESUS’ MOTHER’S ATTITUDE (4-5)

A. Her Expectation

B. Jesus’ Clarification of Their Relationship

1. “Woman” is not a disrespectful term.

2. He did not call her “mother.”

3. His answer is a form of rebuke.

MARY IS NOT THE “MOTHER OF GOD” AND IS NOT TO BE THE OBJECT OF SPECIAL ADORATION OR PRAYER! Note that she is never treated that way by Jesus Himself, not does He have others so treat her. He does send her home with John at His crucifixion.

He will not allow her to direct His actions; He will act in his own time—He determines when His “hour” is come. He will act here—but not now openly or publicly, and not so as to attract attention or a crowd. [“The Hour” does refer to the crucifixion and leads to His glorification and triumph.” We will see this much more in John.]

C. Mary’s Instructions to the “Servants”—not slaves. She did not feel “put off” by Jesus; she knew that He cared and that He would do something to help solve the problem.

“Whatever He says to you, do it.” **These are still good orders for us today.**

Even if the instructions do not make sense to our frail human minds!

She knew that some of the orders might not seem reasonable to them.

III. THE PROBLEM WITH THE OLD DISPENSATION (6-7)

A. Six Stone Water-pots

Remember that this miracle is a “sign.” The Jewish system is inadequate. It cannot meet the true spiritual needs of its subjects. Jesus can do that. He can take the mere water, and can fill the empty pots, and turn it all into wine.

B. Filled to the Brim with Water

C. A complete Transformation Made by Jesus

IV. PROBLEM WITH THE CHANGE OF CUSTOM (8-10)

A. Taking Some of the Wine to the Headwaiter (8)

1. Note that the “deacons”—ministers—did just what Jesus told them to do.
2. They “drew out” some water.
3. They took it to the “headwaiter”.

B. Tasting the Wine (9)

The water “had become wine”

1. The ignorance of the “headwaiter”—Where had the wine originated?
2. The knowledge of the “servants”
3. Calling the groom

C. Talking to the Groom (10)

1. Custom required that one serve the best wine first.
2. Once the taste buds were “sated” [The verb often has the connotation of becoming drunk, and could mean that here.], then the poorer wine would be served to the guests and no one would know any different.
3. This newest wine was obviously superior—it was the *best*. [It is interesting to note that this man was obviously not drunk or he could not have tasted the difference either. No one else was “drunk” either, and it is likely that they also could notice the superior quality of this wine!]

V. THE POWERFUL MANIFESTATION OF JESUS’ GLORY (11)

A. Sovereign Choice: “Jesus Made This the First of His Signs.”

B. Sign

1. Jesus did this sign in Cana of Galilee—of all places He could have chosen!
2. Jesus Used This “Sign” to Teach
 - a. The Sign points to Who the Father is.
 - b. The Sign points to Who Jesus is.
 - c. The Sign points to how superior the new religion is.

C. A Show of His Glory—His splendor, majesty, magnificence, and praise. He

shares the same glory as His Father—See John 17:5: “*Glorify Me together with yourself, Father, with the glory which I ever had with you before the world was.*” All of the “signs” given by John in this Gospel manifest the *glory* of the Lord Jesus, and show Him to be the Christ, the Son of God (20:31)

D. Saving Faith of His Disciples—“His disciples believed in Him.”

CONCLUSION

Again, John shows us the Lord Jesus Christ in this passage—it is **His glory** he shows us, and as we see that glory, we, like His disciples are called to **believe on Him**.

CHRIST IS ALL IMPORTANT—THE REST IS MERE SHADOW.

This First of Jesus’ signs displays several things about Him:

1. He **honors** the Bond of **Marriage**.

LET US BE SURE TO HONOR THE LORD IN OUR MARRIAGES—WHICH ARE TO FOLLOW THE PATTERN OF HIS MARRIAGE TO HIS BRIDE!

2. He bestows **Lavish Gifts** upon His children. *There is no bound to His munificence.*
HOW WE NEED TO BE THANKFUL AND APPRECIATIVE TO HIM FOR ALL HE HAS DONE FOR US!

3. He has **Infinite Power** that matches His Infinite Love.

4. He is the **Son of God**—Full of **Grace** and **glory** (1:14, 16).

5. He invites you to come and partake of the **New Wine** of His eternal salvation.

Remember 1:17; 1:29—“Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.”