

WEDNESDAY BIBLE FELLOWSHIP

Christ Church, Crouch End Hill

Tel/ Fax: 020 8340 1566

No: 80

"The first of the signs" - Water into wine

Brief Talk on John 2: 1– 11

General Introduction

John is the gospel of belief, and was written to show the world that Jesus was the Christ, the "Son of God." Jesus was sent by the Father to give eternal life to those who believe in Him.

Miracles in John are referred to as "signs." The signs are given to confirm the deity of Jesus. The seven principal signs from this gospel are in John 2:1-11, 4:46-51, 5:1-9, 6:1-14, 6:16-21, 9:1-7, and 11:1-46

These miracles are not there simply to create a sensation. They point beyond the immediate dramatic effect in order to help us reflect on who Jesus Christ is. The signs call for a response and recognition not astonishment : "that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:31)

Read John 2:1-11

Summary

This is a story about that uncommon wedding guest, Jesus Christ. Jesus uses a village feast, not as an opportunity to make people happy, but as an opportunity to reveal God. The writer says, "This was the first time Jesus revealed God's glory." Curiously, some people missed it entirely. Jesus stood before them with the power to turn water into wine. Those who really saw what happened could only comment on the quality of the wine. That brings us to a second clue to the story's meaning. If the human Jesus is to reveal the everlasting God, some established customs have to be broken. According to the Fourth Gospel, Jesus Christ is not interested in maintaining stale religious customs and established patterns. Rather he is concerned with bringing us into the presence of the eternal God. In the Cana story as well as those involving his brothers and his friends, Jesus meets the need but he does more. Compassion alone might provide wine, but sovereign grace does more: it reveals God in what is done.

Questions for discussions

1. What is the funniest thing you ever witnessed at a wedding?

2. Jesus, at the time of the miracle under reference, was not known as a miracle - worker, so why did Mary approach him (v.3)?

3. What do you learn about Mary's response to Jesus (vv. 3 and 5?) and the servants response. (vv.7and 8)

4. What particular aspect of Jesus' glory does this miracle display?

5. Given their social customs, how would you feel as the Host (v.3)? _____
As a servant (vv. 6-8) _____
As the groom? _____
6. How does the quality and quantity of the wine demonstrate Jesus' glory? _____
7. How does this sign relate to the "time" Jesus refers to in verse 4 (see also 7:6-8; 12:33; 17:1)

Note: The way to understand this is to realise that in John's Gospel there is a theme that runs all the way through which concerns Jesus' hour/time. I have put additional references here: John 2:4, 7:30, 8:20, 12:23, 13:1. The hour in John's Gospel is the full public revelation of his true character and identity. The big surprise is that this takes place not apart from his death but his death is at the very centre of his public glorification. So when Jesus says my time has not yet come he means that this is not the time for a full public revelation of his glory. He is not the victim of events but is divinely in control of events despite appearances.

8. Where do you need to see the water turned into wine in your life right now? Choose two or three.
- A. SELF ESTEEM: feeling worthless, useless, and out of it.
 - B. FAMILY: feeling hassled, haggard, strung out...
 - C. WORK/SCHOOL: feeling pushed, pressed, and overloaded
 - D. SPIRITUAL LIFE: feeling lonely, dry, and out of sync with God and His family.
 - E. PHYSICAL LIFE: feeling worn out, used up, drained, and ready to retire.
 - F. MENTAL LIFE: feeling dumb, stupid, like my brain has taken a vacation

Note on verse verse 4

Read 2:4. This sounds awfully disrespectful to Mary and insensitive to the couple—like "Hey old lady, what do I care about your plans? I don't have time for this." Actually, Jesus' answer is neither disrespectful nor insensitive.

On the one hand, "woman" (*gunai*). translated "dear woman" in NIV was a term of endearment and respect. As to the rest of Jesus' answer, Jesus is evidently responding to Mary's real intent in making her request. "My hour" refers to the time when Jesus would publicly manifest himself as the Messiah. Mary, who knew Jesus was the Messiah, perhaps saw this situation as the opportunity for Jesus to perform a dramatic miracle that would introduce him as Messiah.

Jesus refuses to handle the situation this way. "What have I to do with you" is a Hebrew idiom that means in this case "I have plans that are different to yours" or "I'll handle this my way, not your way."

Mary responds properly (read 2:5). She expresses her trust in him by deferring to his judgment on how to handle the situation. By doing so, she serves as a model of how we should approach Jesus in our requests to intervene: feel free to ask, believe that he is willing and able to help—but then trusting him to handle it in the best way instead of demanding, manipulating, etc.

And Jesus does intervene—not in a public way, but in a quiet, behind-the-scenes way so that only a few people realized that he saved the day.

Conclusion

The story of Christ turning the water to wine, far from being frivolous, gives us insight into the love and generosity of God. The Creator of heaven and earth is a loving, generous, grace-filled God who desires to provide His children with blessings untold. God does not seek to simply provide the barest essentials for our existence. God has more blessings for us than we can possibly imagine. In this miracle we see Christ's concern for a young couple. We also see the abundant nature of God's grace.

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Finally, this miracle is a metaphor for what can happen in a person's life when he or she invites Christ into his or her heart. Christ can take a sin-filled heart and turn it into one in which the glory of God is revealed.

Wouldn't you like to experience his life-changing touch in your life today?

It is said that the writer Leo Tolstoy experienced that kind of transformation. He told about it in a book titled, *My Conversion*. Tolstoy wrote, "[When] faith came to me; I believed in Jesus Christ, and all my life suddenly changed. I ceased to desire that which previously I had desired, and on the other hand, I took to desiring what I had never desired before. That which formerly used to appear good in my eyes appeared evil and that which used to appear evil appeared good." Before his conversion, Tolstoy had acquired fame and fortune through his great writings. But he was unsatisfied.